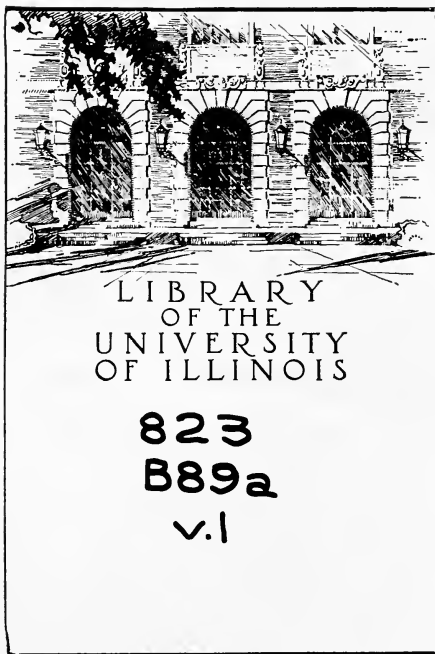




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A T H O M E.

VOL. I.

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# A T H O M E.

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

ENGLISH FASHIONABLES ABROAD.

---

Then gay ideas crowd the vacant brain,  
While Peers, and Dukes, and all their sweeping train,  
And garters, stars, and coronets appear,  
And, in soft sounds, "Your Grace" salutes their ear.

POPE.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

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1828.



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# ENGLISH FASHIONABLES

## AT HOME.

### CHAPTER I.

#### ARRIVALS.

---

See, now comes the captain all daub'd with gold lace,  
Oh, la! the sweet gentleman, look in his face.

SWIFT.

---

**H**AS fate or fancy ever led thee, gentle reader,  
to the pleasant village of Fairton since the  
cavalry-barracks were built on the top of  
Broomhill? If such has been thy fortune, recall  
to thy memory the neatly-gravelled path that  
winds through the oaks and brushwood of this

scraggy mount—the green turnstile that at the bottom of the hill divides this path from the church avenue—the white cottages here and there peeping out from between their respective apple-gardens—the corner of the market-place, with its venerable yew-tree just seen in perspective from the bridge—and lastly, the long reach of the river hurrying towards the dark woods and green glades of Ellesmere Park. No one who has once seen the hamlet of Fairton, the cleanest, brightest, prettiest village in all the west of England, can ever forget it.

Never was this little place in a more joyous bustle than it appeared on a fine evening towards the end of last May twelvemonth. Nearly all the ragged boys of the neighbourhood had collected round a cracked drum and tuneless fife, and were parading up and down the Broomhill path with more zeal than discipline. A well-contested match at single-stick gave excuse, if such were wanting, for the assemblage of most of the village youths at the far end of the avenue; whilst many a blue-eyed

damsel strolled unregarded up and down the mall, dressed in her Sunday garb of ribands, less blooming than her cheeks, and giving alternate attention to the fair companions of her walk, and to the suggestions of her own busy imagination.

Farmer Hughes and the village apothecary leaned over the balustrades of the bridge, sometimes throwing stones into the stream, and sometimes listening for more distant sounds: mine host of the Red Lion paraded the well-swept pavement before his own door; and Betty more than once opened and shut the window of the bow parlour, and returned to re-dust the flower-pot and pepper-caster that stood together on the mantle-piece, whilst a smile on her lip and a tear in her eye struggled for the mastery. For know, gentle reader, that on that eventful day, His Majesty's 70th regiment of dragoons, with yellow facings, had given place to his Majesty's 60th regiment of dragoons, with black facings; and though the former had been deservedly popular, their unknown successors in office were

welcomed with enthusiasm ; and hope or fear, or joy or sorrow, affected more or less every inhabitant of Fairton on so momentous an occasion. In short, that little world was in a temporary state of excitement ; and excitement is in itself, to most men, positive pleasure.

At last, the cracked drum gave place to sounds “more tuneable than pipe to shepherd’s ear ;” and before the setting sun had sunk behind the woods of Ellesmere, the arrival of the first detachment was duly certified. Loaded baggage-waggons were seen to cross the bridge ; a dusty post-chaise or two turned into the yard at the Red Lion to refresh their weary steeds ; and it was even reported, that before the moon had risen, one cornet, two servants, and three corporals, had called at the post-office to inquire for letters. For some days, this delightful agitation continued : nor did the villagers return to the humble tenor of their way till after the whole regiment had been in turn seen and commented upon at church.

Mr. Quantum, the apothecary, was acknow-



ledged to be the pre-eminent tale-bearer of Fairton; and on the excuse of paying a visit, half friendly, half professional, to the surgeon of the newly-arrived regiment, he repaired to the barracks: nor did he return from thence till after having, by indefatigable ingenuity, made himself acquainted with all the names and much of the private history of the different officers; a kind and degree of information which he was always most sedulous to acquire.

But what is the use of any discovery without the enviable privilege of communicating it to the world? The golden ore is worthless in the mine; and, like it, many a tale of wonder has owed its value merely to its currency. Mr. Quantum was fully sensible of this truth; and therefore felt a laudable anxiety to communicate the result of his researches even beyond the precincts of his native village: nor was he ill qualified for this undertaking; for though he had fewer customers than mine host of the Red Lion, and less information than the portly post-

master, he yet possessed the superior advantage of being, in his official capacity, occasionally admitted into the houses of some of the neighbouring gentry : thus forming that connecting link between the two classes of society which naturalists aver is indispensable to all parts of creation.

His Rosinante was at length favoured with the long-forgotten feed of oats—his boots shone in all the glory of Warren's blacking—his usual pocket dictionary, otherwise called Buchan's Medicine, was exchanged for the latest army-list that had reached Fairton ; and, thus prepared, he commenced his intended circuit of visits, by riding up Mr. Fielding's avenue in that determined, measured pace that may be called the trot-important : nor did he stop to comprehend the servant's assurance—that his "master was out walking, but that he would go to seek him"—till after he had reached the library-door, and, at it, made his most obsequious reverence to the empty room.

Mr. Fielding probably owed his precedence

on Mr. Quantum's visiting-list to the circumstance of his being both rector and landlord of the village of Fairton. For though the benevolence of his disposition and the amenity of his manners rendered him affable to all, there was little in his character to induce his present visitor thus to select him as the repository of his newly-acquired information; for amongst Mr. Fielding's various literary pursuits, biography in detail was little attended to; nor did his family contain many of that lovely sex which, since the days of Madame de Sevigné, seems to have taken the department of memoirs under their own especial patronage. For Mr. Fielding had been ten years a widower, and Julia, his only child, was not particularly addicted to gossiping.

Some old-fashioned writer once observed, that no man could feel alone in a library; and that of Mr. Fielding was well calculated to confirm this assertion. Its shelves were filled with the best editions of the classics; its tables were covered with newspapers and other ephemeral

productions. One or two originals of Vandyke bore testimony to Mr. Fielding's favourite studies—painting and pedigree. Handel lay beside Rossini, on one of Broadwood's *capi d'opera*; and on a work-table near the window, stood a glass of water with some lily of the valley in it, which Julia had been copying with a perfection worthy of the pencil of Breughel, “*dit de velours*.”

But Mr. Quantum considered himself in a hurry, and by no means relished the leisure for examining these curiosities, which the protracted absence of the family afforded him. He took up and laid down every newspaper in turn; ascertained that his new army-list was fifteen months older than that of Mr. Fielding: and to walk off the mortification of this discovery, he passed through the large open window into the flower-garden, which, sheltered by impenetrable yew-hedges, and intersected by close-mown grass-walks, gave a luxuriance of shade and sweetness not always attained by modern improvements.

The sun-dial, in the middle of a distant alley, attracted the impatient Mr. Quantum; and on reaching it, his suspense was happily terminated by the arrival of Mr. Fielding and his daughter, for whom, with incredible alacrity, he opened the iron gate which led from the park.

“Charming day, sir—sun almost too powerful—roses and peas in very early this season—Miss Julia looking better than ever—hope she is sufficiently recovered to enjoy dancing now—no doubt there will be some balls in the neighbourhood for the officers—fine set of young men. Mr. Fielding, your large drawing-room would hold thirty couple; and if the globes and green-leather chairs were moved out of the library——”

“I should be sorry to part with my old friends,” said Mr. Fielding, with a good-natured smile.

Mr. Quantum, however, was not to be so easily discouraged—“But no doubt you will visit the officers, my dear sir; they are nearly

all arrived. I took the earliest opportunity of informing you. One detachment is to be stationed at Leeds; another, under the command of Cornet Gubbins——”

“ I have not the honour of being acquainted with Cornet Gubbins.”

“ Well, at all events, you will visit the field-officers, as a matter of course. Let us see—the Colonel—oh! I recollect, he is one of the royal family—or a general—or——”

“ I believe there has lately been a change in the regiment, for the present colonel is Sir Henry Moreton.”

“ Oh, ay! Sir Henry Moreton—yes, that is the name; and his wife—she is or was Lady Somebody Something.” Mr. Quantum’s keen look was even more interrogative than his tone of voice, whilst he made this unqualified assertion.

“ She is a daughter of Lord Alton’s—my niece, Lady Harriet Moreton:” replied Mr. Fielding, with peculiar emphasis.

Mr. Quantum possessed just sufficient tact to

feel that the conversation was in some way disagreeable to Mr. Fielding; and in hopes of extricating himself from the dilemma which he was conscious existed, though he knew not why, he made, as he conceived, an able retrograde movement, by diverging to politics; and after a short pause, continued with his favourite expression. "By the bye, I saw in the papers last week that Lord Alton is to be our new minister—delighted at it, Mr. Fielding, for your sake—no doubt you'll be a bishop by Michaelmas-day;" and he gave a half nod at his own sagacity.

Mr. Fielding looked graver than ever; said something of doubt as to Lord Alton's accepting any place in the administration, and turning to Julia, remarked that the jasmine had grown so much over the library-window, that its beautiful Gothic frame was scarcely visible. By this, they had reached its smooth, broad flagstone, and were just in time to receive the two Misses Weldon and Mr. Warburton, who had ridden to the rectory on nearly the same mis-

sion as that of Mr. Quantum, and whose entrance now formed a seasonable interruption to the very conversation which the latter had gone so far to seek.

The news of Fairton was much more congenial to these two young ladies than it had been to Mr. Quantum's late auditors; and while Mr. Warburton withdrew with Mr. Fielding to examine a new work upon butterflies, the Misses Weldon hastily dispatched the uninteresting part of the conversation that related to their parents' health, by informing Julia that "Sir James had quite lost his gout, but not his peevishness, and that Ma' was just the same as she always was;" and then drawing their chairs close to that of Miss Fielding, on each side, exclaimed, in a tone between impatience and cajolery, "Now, *dear* Julia, that the old ones are off, we want to ask both your advice and assistance."

Mr. Quantum glided into one angle of the Gothic window, and affected to look out at the flower garden.



“ My assistance, Miss Weldon ? ” exclaimed Julia, in surprise.

“ Oh, yes ! ” rejoined both her visitors at once ; and they then continued their harangue in fugue.

“ You know, my dear, papa is such a cross old soul we never can get him to do anything like other people.”

“ And ever since that fuzzy Miss Hackerley told him that Captain Leatherhead was son to the coachmaker, he declares he will never visit the officers again.”

“ And mamma says, if we affront the sixtieth, they’ll cut us dead in town.”

“ And you know we might as well spend next winter at Hull, as to be in London without knowing at least some of the dragoons, and all the guards.”

“ And it was entirely General Derrick that got Mrs. Bawler and her three fat daughters into Almack’s.”

“ And Lady Harriet Moreton is tip-top fashion, and might make our fortune.”

“ And now, would you believe it ? papa declares he will not call even upon Sir Henry Moreton ? ” And here the young ladies concluded their harangue as they had commenced, *en duo*, by exclaiming together, “ And now, Julia, what *shall* we do ? ”

“ Why indeed, Anna,” answered Miss Fielding, laughing, “ I think you must—for once—give up visiting at Broomhill barracks.”

“ Oh ! impossible ! ridiculous ! quite out of the question. No, my dear Julia, on the contrary—we *must* visit Lady Harriet, and that immediately.”

“ I thought her Ladyship was not to arrive till Tuesday ? ” said Mr. Quantum in his gentlest voice, at the same time stepping briskly forward a pace and a half, as if to join the coterie.

“ Oh ! Mr. Quantum, are *you* there ? ” said the eldest Miss Weldon, throwing back her head with an air of condescending civility. “ Well, tell us who *are* come—you of course know all about it.”

And now Cæsar was himself again! Mr. Quantum emerged still more from the recess of the window—nay, his courage was sufficiently reanimated to admit of his sliding cornerwise upon—not into one of the fore-doomed green-leather arm-chairs; and Miss Weldon's curiosity seeming to gather strength from the food it fed on, he proceeded, with infinite deliberation, to give a full account of the whole 60th regiment of dragoons; nor, in his zeal to satisfy her laudable wish for information, did he perceive, till too late, that he had heaped Pelion upon Ossa, and adopted the system of Chinese calculation; for, with admirable precision, worthy of an M. P., he had added the old Army List to the roll-call furnished by his new friend the surgeon at Broomhill, thereby throwing the ranks of his Majesty's cavalry into much greater confusion than Bonaparte himself could have done.

Meantime, Anna Weldon, with much better generalship, steadily pursued her attack upon Miss Fielding.

“ In short, Julia, it’s a decided thing: *coûte qui coûte*, we must become intimate with Lady Harriet Moreton. I have a presentiment that she will be one of my dearest friends.”

“ Why, Anna, you seem quite *entêtée* of this Lady Harriet.”

“ But the question is only, how are we to manage an introduction to her? that’s what we are come to ask your advice about.”

“ You know,” replied Julia, “ my old maxim, that the straightest line is always the shortest. If Lady Harriet Moreton is so very desirable an acquaintance for you to make; and if, as you say, Lady Weldon is so anxious you should make it, I am sure there is hardly a doubt that Sir James will comply with your request; for I think, though he is a little passionate, he is excessively good-natured.”

“ Oh! he is always good-natured to you, because you are such a favourite with him. I wish you had seen him this morning, when mamma talked of having a hussar all dressed in green behind our barouche. But what do you think?

when we had almost got him into good-humour about Lady Harriet Moreton, that eternal Miss Hackerley came in and hummed and haughed so about her, that papa flew off in a tangent, and swore that there must be something in the wind about her—and that——”

“ Why? did Miss Hackerley say anything against her ?”

“ Oh no ! She took a pretty sharp hint I gave her, by pinching her under the table—nasty, ugly, old maid as she is ; and as to whether Lady Harriet Moreton is one of the Saints or not, mamma says it don’t signify a farthing, for so long as she is at all visitable, she will do to present us at St. James’s.”

“ Indeed I must say, that I am certain nothing can be said against her character, for my dearest father had a letter to-day from my uncle, asking him to call upon her and Sir Henry Moreton. You know she is my uncle’s daughter.”

“ Lord Alton’s daughter !—Your own cousin ! What ! she was Lady Harriet Fielding ? Oh !

delightful—charming—the very thing—that is excellent—now I'll tell you——.”

But the young Lady's communications were interrupted by the return of Mr. Fielding and Mr. Warburton ; and whilst the latter paid his *respects* (as he justly termed them) to Julia ; and whilst Mr. Fielding soothed the anxieties of poor Mr. Quantum, by presenting him with some of the earliest productions of his garden, the two sisters apparently arranged their future plans by masonic signals, for in a few moments they jumped up simultaneously, and calling to Mr. Warburton in no suppressed tone of voice, impatiently inquired whether he would escort them home, or whether he was obliged to return to Posy Lodge ?

“ *A vos ordres,*” replied the antiquated beau, gallantly raising to his lips the middle finger of his only ungloved hand ; and then withdrawing it with a circular motion, intended to include Julia in the compliment. He would have bowed—but that he was too fat ; he would have sighed, perchance—but his rubicund cheeks

and dimpling mouth were eminently anti-sentimental. Mr. Warburton knew accurately what his own peculiar privileges in society actually were, and he very wisely never committed himself beyond them; and as the present was neither the scene nor the audience adapted for a display of connoisseurship either in *virtù* or gastronomy, he quietly followed the belles who had thus confided themselves to his guardianship; and as he deliberately placed himself on horseback, methodically taking up each of his white reins separately—then pulling the flaps of his coat from under him, raising his hat a little up behind and a little at one side—and lastly, bidding a long farewell to his saddle, to poise himself in his patent stirrups, his attention was too much absorbed, to notice the peculiar expression of Anna Weldon's countenance, as, patting her horse's crest, she laughingly exclaimed, "Good bye, Julia—remember me to your relations."

Mr. Quantum speedily followed these equestrians; a huge cucumber peeping out of each

pocket—and a small bundle of asparagus serving as a nosegay—whilst Julia gaily carolling a Spanish tiranna, returned to her usual occupations, and in a short time forgot—not only her relationship to Lady Harriet, Moreton, but even her vicinity to his Majesty's 60th regiment of dragoons.



## CHAPTER II.

## THE DINNER.

---

But I remember, when the fight was done  
Came there a certain lord, neat, trimly drest ;  
Fresh as a bridegroom—still he smiled and talk'd.  
With many holiday and lady terms  
He question'd me—and but for these vile guns  
He would himself have been a soldier.

HENRY IV.

---

THE success of the Misses Weldon's machinations, whatever they might have been, was soon ascertained, as in less than a fortnight a folio invitation-card arrived at the rectory, requesting the honour of Mr. and Miss Fielding's company to dinner at Weldon House ; and into the envelope, Anna had slipped a little pink note, recommending Julia to be careful of her

toilet, as she “would meet all the officers,”—with three dashes under the last sentence.

Julia and her father were at breakfast when this despatch arrived, and she threw it over to him with a serio-comic air of mock gravity.

“Is my Julia then particularly ambitious to captivate *all the officers*?” inquired Mr. Fielding with a radiant smile, expressing more of pleasure than anxiety.

“No; one half of the regiment would satisfy all my views of conquest; or rather, I have no wish on the subject, except to know Lady Harriet Moreton.”

“Lady Harriet Moreton!” exclaimed Mr. Fielding, in a tone of surprise, and the expression of his countenance became visibly altered. “And what can induce you, my child, to wish for *her* acquaintance?”

“Only, my dear father, because I have heard so much of her Ladyship.”

“Heard?—what?”—and Julia was startled by the earnestness of Mr. Fielding’s manner.

“Why, Anna Weldon says, she is a wo-

man of tip-top fashion—and Mr. Quantum says —”

“ Pshaw! did you only hear of her from that gossiping doctor, and that giggling Anna Weldon?”

“ How could I hear of her but from them, my dearest father?—for though I know she is my cousin, I have hardly ever heard you mention her. What is she like?”

“ Very like that picture ;” and Mr. Fielding cast a melancholy glance towards a portrait of Julia’s mother. “ At least she resembled it as a child, and I have not seen her since.”

“ Is she indeed like that picture !” said Julia, and her eyes filled with tears as she thought of her mother, whom she still in some degree remembered.

“ There is certainly a strong family likeness,” said Mr. Fielding, speaking rather to his own thoughts than to Julia. “ Would to heaven their characters resembled each other !”—he rose as he said this, and took some turns across the room. This mention of his wife, however

casual, had touched a chord which thrilled in his inmost soul. The poignancy of regret threw a passing sadness on his clammy brow, and trembled in the drooping corners of his mouth; but the gloom was transient: another moment, and a ray from heaven seemed to lighten on the suppliant's head, and the sorrows of the man were forgotten in the Christian's hopes.

“ Julia, my love,” continued Mr. Fielding, calmly resuming his seat, “ I have a deep and almost painful interest in Lady Harriet Moreton. Her mother, you know, was your aunt—the sister of the departed angel who to us is—‘ not lost, but gone before.’ Lady Harriet, like yourself, is her father’s only care. Judge if Lord Alton is not anxious about her;” and taking a letter from his pocket, he read the following detached sentences.

“ Will you, my dear Fielding, be her friend, her protector, as well as parent?—I will not recall the memory of the past—I will not invoke the shades of those we both have loved. But I will call on you as a minister of that reli-

gion, whose paths are peace, to stretch forth an arm strong enough to save a faltering fellow-creature from destruction.—Harriet, I fondly flatter myself, has suffered less from her own errors, than from the envy of others. To doubt her innocence, would bring despair; but yet I cannot shut my eyes to the fatal truth, that, whether deservedly or not, her conduct has not escaped reproach.—There is a moment when public opinion trembles in the balance, and vibrates to every breath of censure or of praise. In such a moment, many an incipient spark of virtue has been extinguished by the cold whispers of unfeeling doubt. Should such assail my dear imprudent child—save her, Fielding, save her, I conjure you, from the pelting of the pitiless storm; shelter her, protect her—if not for her mother's sake—save her for mine.”

Mr. Fielding continued the perusal of this letter in silence; and Julia thought with mixed emotions on these expressions of Lord Alton's feelings towards his daughter, as compared with

the frivolous observations made on her by Miss Weldon. She remembered, as if in a dream, having heard Mrs. Fielding speak of Lady Alton in terms that left on her infant mind a faint impression of dislike. She recollected, too, a very fine lady highly rouged, whom she was desired to call aunt, having come with a little girl some years older than herself, to see her mother a few days before she left England, never to return. This could have been no other than Lady Alton and her daughter. Then she *had* seen Lady Harriet Moreton?—" 'Tis very odd," thought she, "that till now I have hardly ever heard my father mention her!" The recollections connected with her name were unaccountably painful, and she looked forward almost with dread to the chance of again being thrown into her society.

But all Julia's meditations were insufficient to discover a solution of the apparent mystery which had impeded her father's acquaintance with Lady Harriet Moreton, whilst his intimacy with Lord Alton was, as she knew, un-

bounded. The fact was, that she was unacquainted with the circumstances of her father's earlier life; and, till this day, no recent event had occurred to bring this reflection to her mind.

Mr. Fielding's father had been the late Lord Alton's only brother; and the ties both of affection and consanguinity which united them in the closest bonds of friendship, seemed to have been perpetuated in their children; as, although the present Lord Alton was many years younger than Mr. Fielding, they always had lived together in a degree of intimacy almost fraternal; till, unfortunately, the very similarity of their tastes, in leading them to form an attachment to the same lady, occasioned a temporary interruption of their intercourse. Mr. Fielding was the favoured lover; and in a moment of pique, Lord Alton transferred his attentions to her sister, whom he married on a short acquaintance.

This union was unfortunate. Lady Alton was vain, unfeeling, arrogant, and capricious; and whilst her sister, in the retirement of Fair-

ton Rectory, conferred and enjoyed domestic bliss beyond the common lot of mortality,—the Countess, with all that rank, splendour, and beauty could bestow, poisoned the cup of happiness that was within her reach, and made him miserable whom all the world besides delighted to honour.

Whilst either of these ladies lived, though no open rupture between the two families gratified the public ear, all private intercourse between them was suspended. But Lady Alton dying previous to Mr. Fielding's return from the Continent, a correspondence by letter was renewed between the cousins, alike gratifying to both, and their kindred minds soon found that their mutual regard had merely been dormant—not destroyed.

This correspondence soon became confidential on both sides; but though Mr. Fielding had met Lord Alton occasionally in London and its neighbourhood, he had not seen Lady Harriet since the day when she had accompanied the Countess to take a last farewell of her



dying parent ; and as Lord Alton had never so far overcome his feelings, as to visit the rectory, where Julia had latterly been stationary, the Earl and his niece were equally strangers to each other.

The idea of meeting Lady Harriet Moreton engrossed Julia's mind, nearly as much as it seemed to have done that of Anna Weldon ; but the expectation was one fraught rather with pain than pleasure. Of what strange materials is the human heart composed ! Sometimes the mists of futurity rise to our view in visionary gloom, as if to notify approaching ill. Sometimes the heart bounds forward to grasp the fleeting present, as if in it we traced the shadow of some scene gone by. Is memory or prescience then our guide ? Have we pre-existed in some other sphere ? or, is it only that, at those moments, our guardian angel flutters in sad anticipation round us, spreading his dark wings over our soul, as if at once to warn and guard us from impending danger ?

At length the day arrived on which Julia

and her father were summoned to Weldon House. Some professional duties having obliged Mr. Fielding to visit unexpectedly a distant part of his parish, Julia in vain entreated permission to send her excuse ; but the Rector was peremptory in his commands that she should go without him ; for Lady Weldon and her daughters had seemed so particularly solicitous for her company, that Mr. Fielding, with sensitive delicacy, feared her absence might be misconstrued ; and he therefore insisted on Julia's placing herself, as she had often done before, under the guardianship of Lady Ellesmere, who was to meet her there ; and he further promised, if possible, to join his daughter in the evening.

It was with no small pleasure that Julia heard, on entering Lady Weldon's drawing-room, that Lady Harriet Moreton was not yet arrived from London ; and before Anna Weldon had confided to her half her regrets on the occasion, the arrival of "all the officers" suspended their conversation ; and Julia, unnoticed

by either her friends or the hostess, retired to a distant seat beside the governess.

And now the noise of spurs, and swords, and spatterdashes, and tasselled epaulets, and varnished helmets, rendered even the names of the cavaliers nearly inaudible, although the commanding-officer went through the ceremony of repeating them in turn to Sir James, as the English ambassador does to the French king at the Tuileries; whilst each gentleman, being "presented and away," knocked his boots into the third position, turned on his heel from Sir James to Lady Weldon, moved his chin on the upper circle of his black stock, nearly a degree and a half towards his left ear; and then filed off to a convenient distance, in the happy consciousness that his contribution to the day's entertainment was thereby amply fulfilled.

The room was nearly full; and Lady Weldon had more than once proclaimed her wonder at Lord and Lady Ellesmere being so late; when at last the door opened, and the thick-set, strong-built, perfumed little figure of Mr. War-

burton presented itself, as the substitute for the Earl's whole family.

“ He was quite shocked at being so late—hoped dinner had not been kept waiting—never would forgive himself if even *one* dish was spoiled—had driven round from Posy Lodge to Ellesmere Park, intending to accompany her La'ship hither; but just at the moment they were all stepping into the carriage, Lady Ellesmere received an express from her son, saying that he was just arrived from Paris, and was on the road to Ellesmere—waited till the last instant in hopes of bringing Lord Calvert with them, accompanied by his friend Mr. Fitzosborne—sorry, instead, to be the bearer of Lord and Lady Ellesmere's apologies—certain the two travellers would have been delighted at this early opportunity of paying their respects to Sir James and Lady Weldon, and offering their *hommages aux demoiselles*—left Lady Ellesmere quite in a pleasing flurry at the idea of Lord Calvert's return,” &c. &c. &c.

“ *Cela passe outre,*” exclaimed the dragoon,

with whom Miss Weldon had for some time been flirting. "Such tender solicitude is not common with maternals in this age of improvement."

Julia turned to look at the speaker, and was not a little amused at the perfectly *naïve* expression which Sir Henry Moreton had contrived to throw into his countenance; for it was him who thus eulogised the absent Countess.

He was carelessly leaning back in his chair; his broad shoulders and expansive chest displaying to the utmost advantage his peculiarly rich and costly uniform. His black hair and well-cultivated whiskers gave a martial appearance to his face, which seemed not exactly in unison either with the expression of his countenance or the outline of his features; for his nose was short, rather too broad for beauty, and too flat for sense, but its point had that bend upwards that indicates satire. His lips, thick and prominent, usually distended in smiles that disclosed a beautiful range of teeth; but sometimes, too, the lips were so closely com-

pressed, that the teeth themselves seemed clenched. His forehead, broad, smooth, and fair, was bounded by dark and bushy eyebrows; and whatever wrinkles had dared to intrude, had collected themselves round the outward corners of his eyes, giving, as occasion might require, additional hilarity to his ready laugh, or keener scrutiny to his penetrating glance.

Dinner being announced, Sir Henry Moreton was commanded by his host to resign the daughter for the mother; and he accordingly proceeded to assist Lady Weldon in the distribution of the upper dish with that *nonchalance* that always distinguishes a professed carver. All bills of fare now pretty nearly resemble each other, and everybody expects the regular routine of *vol-au-vents*, *filets*, and *galantines*, as much as our forefathers calculated on boiled turkeys and roast pigs. But nevertheless, Sir James Weldon seemed anxious to obtain Mr. Warburton's approbation of his dinner, and repeatedly addressed to him some remark as to

the freshness of his salmon, or regret that his venison was not in season.

“Why, my dear Sir James,” replied Mr. Warburton, as he dismissed his last morsel of *matelote d’anguilles*, “as you say, venison is no bad thing when it is in prime season; it is positively the only *plat de résistance* a gentleman can eat. But upon the whole, I rather doubt whether *chevreuil* is not better.”

“Perhaps it is, if one could ever get it dressed without vinegar,” said Major Crosbie, who was not sorry to seize this opportunity of showing that he too was a traveller.

“Nay, I think, Crosbie, the *marinade* is the best part of it,” exclaimed Sir Henry Moreton.

“I’ll answer for it, a good South Down is worth all the *chevreuils* in the world,” replied Sir James, in a tone of impatience.

“What think you, Mr. Warburton, of our *pré-salé* mutton at Paris?”

“Ah! *c’est la viande par excellence!* But, Sir Henry, give me leave to ask, have you

crossed the Alps? Have you been to Rome to eat wild boar?"

"Alas, no! I never got beyond the Chamôis and the valley of Chamouni."

Mr. Warburton's respect for Sir Henry sensibly diminished; it however revived again before dinner was concluded, owing to his overhearing the gallant Colonel talking well on the horrors of effervescing champaign, as compared with still champaign; and the friendly feeling was at last fully restored by Sir Henry's correct enumeration of the thirty-six ingredients necessary to form a salad. Nor did Mr. Warburton wait to discuss more than two-thirds of the dishes that lay in his more immediate neighbourhood, before he imparted to Sir Henry, with all the apparent frankness of unreserved confidence, Aschambault's receipt for *sauce aux langues en papillotes*, withholding nothing from his friend but the principal ingredient—the champignons.

Meantime, Miss Weldon had been eminently unsuccessful in her attempts to draw the other



beaux into either conversation or acquaintance. Major Crosbie was placed between her and a blue-stocking lady of the neighbourhood, whose unremitting interrogations respecting the author of *De Vere* left him little leisure to pay his devoirs either to Miss Weldon or the *salmi* that was opposite to him. And on the other side of her was unfortunately placed the only shy captain in the regiment. With almost jealous looks of wonder did she therefore behold her sister, who, seated at the other end of the table, had succeeded in at last extracting a few monosyllables, and even something like a colloquy from her satellite.

“Are you fond of dancing, Captain Brisbane?”

“We don’t dance,” was his reply.

“What! not even at Almack’s?” rejoined Anna, anxious to show that she was at least acquainted with that cabalistic name.

The Captain turned his head slowly round, his stiff stock remaining stationary; and, gradually raising his sleepy eyelids, he seemed to

intend a survey of his fair querist, from the level of her plate to the pinnacle of the rose-bush that grew out of her topmost curl. The investigation apparently was as conclusive as that of a minister when a memorial is in question: "We have taken your case into consideration:" of course the answer was concise, and in the negative.

"No, do you?"

"I hope to dance a great deal at Almack's next spring. Sister and I are not come out yet, but we are to be presented the first drawing-room after Christmas."

Another survey followed this remark; but as Captain Brisbane again took the trouble of raising his eyes, they met those of the Honourable Mr. Jessop, apparently wandering in the same direction; and the smile that followed, was to be explained by his gracious acceptance of that gentleman's challenge to a glass of hock.

"Quite a treat," slowly articulated the Captain, as he replaced his glass in its cooler.

“*Sans pareil*,” rejoined Mr. Jessop, to whom the remark was addressed.

“Papa is famous for his wines; I really believe he has as many different kinds as sister and I have bracelets. He! he! he!”

“Any home-made?” and Captain Brisbane condescended to look at the very pretty arm which shone in whiteness even through the dingy gigot and countless gewgaws that disfigured it.

“Oh yes! sister and I do a quantity of bead-work. Sometimes we sit at it from morning till night. Mr. Warburton says we should make good Catholics, we are so fond of counting our beads. He! he! he! Oh! I declare this snap is broken!” and the obedient bracelet fell at Captain Brisbane’s feet. But, *O tempora! ó mores!* he stooped not, moved not, and Lady Weldon just then rising to adjourn to the drawing-room, the honour of restoring the gem to its owner devolved upon the under-butler.

Hitherto it had appeared that the peculiar

solicitude which both Lady Weldon and her daughters had at first expressed for Julia's company, had latterly somehow totally escaped their memory, as she had been left entirely to the care of Sir James, who was never so pleased or so good-humoured as when his "blush-rose," as he called Julia, was beside him. Seeing that her kind host was equally neglected by his visitors and his family, she had particularly exerted herself to amuse him; and so much did he engross her attention, that she totally forgot how many of "the officers" had asked her to drink wine, or even that the Honourable Mr. Jessop had once spoken to her across the table, to *relever* a bon-mot of hers that Sir James could not comprehend. All these interesting circumstances were, however, in time, recalled to her memory; for a lady's drawing-room is not the land where all things are forgotten; and the Misses Weldon lost not a moment in dragging their "*dear* Julia" into a corner, in order to have an opportunity of "talking over all the officers."

Lady Weldon meanwhile undertook the task of entertaining the seniors of the party, although it was not one for which she was well qualified. As a spinster, she had been considered rich ; as a matron, she was reckoned proud ; but alas ! with the best intentions in the world, she had never yet been characterised as fashionable.

“ ’Tis not in mortals to command success.” But she did more. She deserved it ; for with a perseverance and self-denial that in a better cause might have gained a martyr’s crown, she did every thing which she was told was genteel, and abstained from doing every thing she naturally liked ; offering, in hourly sacrifice, her taste, her habits, her comforts, and almost her happiness, at the shrine of that wayward goddess Fashion ; who, like the prophet of the East, is only known by sound to the uninitiated.

For instance : No person could enjoy more robust health than Lady Weldon did. But she had once dined where the fine lady of the mansion gloried in her *petite santé* ; and now Lady Weldon’s corpulent frame and expansive cheeks

were, in humble imitation, stretched at full length on a *chaise longue*, whilst in a subdued tone she occasionally joined languishingly in the conversation of her guests.

“ I thought we were to have had Lady Harriet Moreton here to-day ?” said Mrs. Colon, the blue-stocking lady.

“ I knew she would not leave her father just now ; for my sister writes me word from town, that Lord Alton is *certainly* to be the new minister.”

This speech was delivered in a dictatorial voice by Mrs. Masham, a lady who, like the dolphin, owed all her lustre to reflected light ; for her sister had the supreme good fortune to be married to a paralytic old bishop, who was regular in his attendance in the House of Lords. Of course, therefore, Mrs. Masham had always the first intelligence on politics. She had also once received from London a gown *oiseau de paradis*, three weeks before that colour had entirely disappeared from Kensington Gardens. And though in literature she

yielded the palm to the blue-stockings lady above mentioned, yet she frequently contrived to anticipate even her in a new novel, and always knew "from the *best* authority," not only the real name of the author, but also those of his fictitious personages.

"I am glad to hear you say so, Mrs. Masham," drawled out Lady Weldon, "for the sake of our friend Mr. Fielding. Julia, my love, take care you don't get cold by sitting so near that door."

"And how will Mr. Fielding manage with the Moretons?" inquired Miss Hackerley, speaking low, looking wise, and thrusting out her chin.

"Of course he will be attentive to them," replied Lady Weldon, speaking in the same under-tone, but equally expressively. "We asked Julia here to-day on purpose to meet her cousin."

"Why, Lord bless me," resumed Miss Hackerley, "when I was in London three years ago, Lady Harriet Moreton was hardly noticed."

“ Oh ! I beg your pardon,” rejoined Mrs. Masham, “ I speak from the *best* authority. I know she is a delightful person. My sister writes me word, that she and the Bishop are very fond of her ; indeed Lady Harriet asked my sister for an introduction to us.”

“ Pshaw !” exclaimed the downright plain-spoken Mrs. Colon. “ We all know she was on the point of being divorced from her first husband.”

“ Yes, indeed,” valiantly retorted the persevering Miss Hackerley. “ And only that General Warder died just in time——”

“ Miss Hackerley,” interrupted Lady Weldon, “ I must tell you, that if Lady Harriet was a little gay in her manners in her first husband’s life, she had every excuse, for he was a sick, ugly old man.”

“ A good excuse indeed for a wife being gay,” observed Mrs. Colon, with a sneer. “ But why did she marry him, if she did not like him ?”

“ For a very good reason, my dear madam ;



Lord Alton's estates are all entailed on the heir to the title; and besides, it is possible Lord Alton may marry again."

"So, because her father was comparatively young, excessively agreeable, and his estates very considerable, she was obliged to marry, at eighteen, a sick, ugly old man. Well, Mrs. Masham, you must find a better reason," continued Mrs. Colon.

"General Warder was very rich and very magnificent; and though Lady Harriet's fortune was large, her ideas even went beyond it."

"*Ah! c'est une autre affaire que cela.* I am, however, only surprised at Lord Alton having objected to this match, or at the world having sneered at it. And if, as I suppose, the old General was kind and generous to his young wife, why, as you say, Lady Weldon, it was no wonder she was gay."

"Gay!" vociferated Miss Hackerley, almost in a scream. "Gay! why I have heard—I won't vouch for the truth, but I have been told—not that I would take away her character——"

however, now you know that she is married to this Sir Henry Moreton, we shall see how she conducts herself."

"Well, ladies, I can only tell you from the very *best* authority," rejoined Mrs. Masham, that Lady Harriet Moreton is now quite the fashion. She was the reigning favourite in the very highest society all spring," continued she, with considerable emphasis; "and my sister writes me word, that she has been so ever since she and Sir Henry returned from Switzerland."

"She was not so when they went to Switzerland," remarked Miss Hackerley. "However, we shall see whether Lady Ellesmere will visit her."

"Of course," replied Lady Weldon. "You know Lord Calvert has carried his election, and Lord Alton may be of great use to him."

"Well! I shall be greatly surprised if ever I meet Lady Harriet Moreton at Ellesmere Park."

Mrs. Colon was very fond of what she called

discussion, (her husband called it contradiction,) and she replied, " And I shall be greatly surprised if I do *not* meet Lady Harriet there. Lady Ellesmere, Miss Hackerley, has sufficient respectability to be able to share her good reputation with others not so well off. And I have often heard say, that it is a cruel thing to drive any young woman to desperation by appearing to doubt her innocence, so long as there is a possibility of disbelieving her guilt."

" Well, I am sure I would not for the world suspect any person's character."

" No, I never heard you discredit a tale of scandal in my life."

" And if everybody visits Lady Harriet, you, Miss Hackerley, will of course attend her Ladyship's parties."

" I knew, Mrs. Colon," observed Lady Weldon, " that you would agree with me. Lady Ellesmere, I am sure, will visit Lady Harriet, both for the sake of Lord Calvert and her daughters."

" There I differ with you entirely, Lady

Weldon ; Lady Ellesmere is one of the proudest women in Christendom, and ——”

But now the welcome sounds of clattering spurs proclaimed, as in olden time, the approach of heroes. In an instant, the two Misses Weldon escaped from their “ dear ” Julia, and were to be seen placed negligently back to back on the ottoman in the middle of the room. Bochsa’s last selection of favourite airs from *La Didone* lay scattered beside them, as manifestoes of their accomplishments ; but due care was taken that neither the loose music nor the multitudinous cushions should appear to occupy *all* the seats ; and this precaution was not unwise, for in a few minutes Sir Henry Moreton placed himself and his coffee-cup beside the eldest Miss Weldon, allowing his pendent epaulet to fall remorseless on the fat, fair, unveiled shoulders of the careless Anna, who might almost have supplied the place of those old-fashioned, stuffed, high-backed settees, that were discarded when our grandmothers laid aside hoops and fountains.

Anna was not, however, long left thus neglected. It is true, almost "all the officers" clustered together in groups, sipping their coffee without cream, and occasionally uttering to each other a few inaudible monosyllables. Major Crosbie looked interesting, as he leaned over the back of Lady Weldon's couch; but he said nothing; and the Honourable Mr. Jesop picked his teeth, as he turned over the leaves of an old almanack. But young Squire Colon and dandy Mr. Masham, who were thus completely distanced by the exquisites, had, in their discomfiture, turned to the obliging Anna, and with unusual eagerness urged her to give them some music. She, nothing loth, tried waltz after waltz, and *sauteuse* after *sauteuse*. But, alas! the immoveable officers were invulnerable in the heel.

"Orpheus himself would not move these brutes," whispered Mrs. Colon; who perchance recollected with some degree of malevolence, Major Crosbie's taciturnity. Anna Weldon seemed to agree with her on this subject; and

at last, in very earnest, she asked Julia to give up the pleasure of talking to Mr. Warburton, and to take her place at the piano-forte. But she had scarcely played the symphony of *Il soave e bel contento*, when Mr. Jessop glided towards the instrument, and Sir Henry Moreton begun to nod his head in time to the music; and before she had finished the first part of the air, he exclaimed, in answer to some question of Miss Weldon's about a horse, "How delightfully your governess sings!"

"Our governess!—You don't mean old Madame Delaporte?"

"I mean that very pretty girl that is now at the piano-forte."

"La! she is not our governess!—he! he! he! what a good joke!—She is our rector's daughter."

"*Cela m'étonne, par exemple.* I declare I took her for a *véritable Italienne.*"

"Oh! no wonder," returned Miss Weldon, with a scornful toss of her head. "Miss Fielding was seven years on the Continent."

“ Good heavens ! is that Miss Fielding ? pray do me the honour to introduce me to her.”

To Miss Weldon’s astonishment, Sir Henry was instantly on his feet ; and almost without waiting for the introduction, was the next moment at Julia’s side.

The lethargic Colonel was instantly transformed into the man of the world ; and he paid his compliments to Julia with all the ease of a practised *cavaliere servente*, but yet in such guise, that there was enough of gallantry to render them piquant, and enough of *retenue* to make them acceptable. He had instantly guessed that such strains could only proceed from Miss Fielding—might he claim the privilege of a relation, and express his regrets at Mr. Fielding’s absence ? He should now be able to answer all Lady Harriet’s queries about her dear little cousin : for Lady Harriet could only think of her still as a child, but one that was always held up to her as a model. In short, Miss Fielding’s carriage was announced, before Sir Henry had invented more than three impromptu

quotations from his wife's letters in praise of Julia; and though he allowed Mr. Jessop to shawl her, the Colonel's arm was offered as a matter of course to support her through the fatigue of taking leave of her "dear" friends, who, on the moment of her departure, fortunately recollected how extremely solicitous they had been for the pleasure of her company.



## CHAPTER III.

LORD CALVERT.

---

His form accorded with a mind  
Lively and ardent—frank and kind.  
Yet friends who nearest knew the youth,  
His scorn of wrong—his zeal for truth ;  
And bards who saw his features bold,  
When kindled by the tales of old,  
Said—were that youth to manhood grown,  
Not long should Roderick Dhu's renown  
Be foremost voiced by mountain fame.

LADY OF THE LAKE.

---

JULIA was in that happy season of life when the mind, like the smooth surface of an unruffled lake, reflects each passing image, and changes its aspect with every succeeding moment. If imperturbability is not the charac-

teristic of either, yet each can boast that whilst the darkest cloud is soonest broken, the last ray of sun-shine rests on the placid mirror in lengthened light.

So it was with Julia's spirits. The disappointment in not having been joined by her father, was lost in the anticipated pleasure of returning to him. The transient anxiety she had felt on the subject of meeting Lady Harriet Moreton was postponed, if not entirely dispelled. The solicitude of the Misses Weldon to monopolize the attentions of "all the officers" had amused, not mortified her; and finally, the well-bred, though tardy compliments of Sir Henry Moreton had been doubly gratifying, because wholly unexpected: in brief, she returned in high spirits to the rectory.

The midsummer sun had scarcely sunk behind the deep woods of Ellesmere Park; and whilst his roseate radiance yet tinged the western sky, the moon rose in serener brightness from behind the scraggy summit of Broomhill. It was a beautiful scene; and as the car-

riage wound slowly up the steep ascent from the lower gate of Mr. Fielding's park, the gay and active Julia used her utmost powers of entreaty to prevail on her constant *chaperone*, "old nurse," to accompany her on foot by the nearer pathway, that in a more direct, yet less accessible track leads through the wood to the house: for a moment, nurse reflected on the narrow turnstiles and almost perpendicular ascent. But Julia tied her own silk scarf so carefully round poor nurse's neck, and reminded her how often they had trodden that path in safety, that the good old lady, as usual, yielded to the entreaties of her "own dear child," as she still called Miss Fielding, and contentedly hobbled on, leaning with perfect reliance and no little weight on Julia's fragile arm.

The summit was almost gained, and they had sufficiently emerged from the recesses of the wood to catch a glimpse of the bright water under Fairton bridge, when, at a turn of the path, they stopped on a little natural terrace where Julia had fixed a seat, the use of which

was not then unacceptable to her less agile companion. But as they paused for a moment, the moving shadow of a man crossed the moon-beam that shone on the path before them, and the next instant Lord Calvert stood at Julia's side.

The mutual surprise was so great, that for a few seconds neither spoke : at last, Lord Calvert exclaimed, " Dearest Julia, how delighted I am to meet you ! And you are looking so well ! but how came you here ? "

" Nay, how came *you* here ? " rejoined Julia, laughing : " I suppose your Lordship will certainly vote for the abolition of spring-guns. "

" Is that your mode of congratulation on my having gained my election ? Don't you think, nurse, she treats me very cavalierly on my return ? " And so saying, he playfully drew Julia's arm under one of his, and nurse's under the other ; and without invitation, turned to escort them to the house.

" In good truth, my Lord, " replied the nurse, as well as the steep road would allow her to speak, " if Miss Julia treats you ill when you

are present, I am sure she often thinks of you when you are absent: for I observe the lily of the valley you gave her is always the first watered; and she was always reading travel-books when you were in foreign parts."

"Is that true, Julia?—then you don't quite forget your old playfellow?" and Lord Calvert looked earnestly under her large hat, as he said this; but even in these two short sentences, his tones varied perceptibly. The first was almost whispered; and surprise and pleasure marked the interrogatory: a colder feeling seemed to pass over his mind as he said the last; but in neither were his words accompanied by that frank, joyous, yet affectionate manner, that had characterised their intercourse when they had last met. Julia forgot that three years makes a perceptible difference in young ladies from fourteen to seventeen; and felt half offended, she knew not why, at her former favourite. Whilst he, as rapidly recurring in thought to those innocent pleasures of childhood which they had enjoyed together, with difficulty suppressed

a sigh, as he reflected on the change which those three eventful years had made in his habits, his feelings, and perhaps his destinies.

Julia felt embarrassed, and was the first to break the pause which had ensued. "Talking of old times, I hope you do not think my father is much altered. Of course you have seen him, my Lord?"

Lord Calvert answered this query by stating in a careless manner that he had, and at the same time left it to Julia's penetration to discover the motive of his untimely visit. He did *not* tell her that a principal part of his inducement to visit the rectory was the circumstance of having been left for a few moments alone in the inn at Fairton; as the companion of his journey, Mr. Fitzosborne, had gone to the barracks of Broomhill, in hopes of seeing Sir Henry and Lady Harriet Moreton. Meanwhile, the brilliant moonlight and lovely scenery had induced his Lordship to prefer taking a stroll through Mr. Fielding's park, to spending the half hour of his absence in counting the panes

in the bow-window at the Red Lion. Nor did he tell her, that having found Mr. Fielding at home, he had profited by the opportunity of procuring for his friend, Mr. Fitzosborne, a long-wished-for introduction to Lord Alton. Yet such had in truth been the chief, if not the only motives of Lord Calvert's visit to the parsonage. But as he and Julia stopped in the broader light at the entrance of the terrace, and as he marked the perfect symmetry of her form now just opening into womanhood, he thought, or at least inferred, that still other inducements might, perchance, be found for revisiting that scene; and though he refused her present invitation to re-enter the house, he consoled himself with the determination of ascertaining, ere long, whether Miss Fielding looked as handsome in day-light as she appeared to him that evening.

Young, gay, and handsome, the heir to a princely fortune, and a rank scarcely less illustrious, it is not to be supposed that Lord Calvert had remained three years on the Continent

without finding himself courted, if not duly appreciated, by his associates. Amongst the fair sex he had been the object of professed attachment to many a practised coquette, and of covert machination to many a calculating matron; whilst to his own he had been not less the mark for speculation. But in this, he little differed from hundreds of his countrymen, who are daily made either dupes or idols. What are the effects of this notoriety on his character? Let others answer who have run the same intoxicating race, and been, like him, exposed to the *dolcezza lusinghieri* of foreign adulation.

When Lord Calvert quitted Oxford for the Continent, he had left it with a cultivated taste, a mind saturated with classic lore, and a heart warmed with all the kindlier feelings of humanity: but at the same time he held his talents in abeyance to the wisdom of others, and with the ingenuous modesty of youth, doubted no person's merit but his own. When he first walked the streets of Paris, it was with feelings of timidity almost painful: afraid to express



even the natural emotions of surprise, and honestly believing that every man's coat was better made than his. By degrees, the dandy catching with cautious aptitude the peculiarities of others, gave way to the adventurous chief, who with bold inspiration invented new extravagancies for the imitation of the crowd; and, before many months had elapsed, he adopted and believed in the opinions of those who (at least as they were reported to him) zealously maintained that he alone "was wisest, discreetest, best."

Still Lord Calvert's sound principles and hereditary pride deterred him from associating with any who were not of that privileged caste, miscalled good society. But this precaution benefited only himself. He was not "one of those faultless monsters whom the world ne'er saw;" and in that very society his example lent a sanction to much that was reprehensible. For the errors of the upper ranks, accumulating as they fall, roll downwards to the extremest verge of civilised society; and many an aspiring

youth has been hurried into crime by simply endeavouring to imitate the negative follies of his superiors.

In this stage of his apprenticeship to the world, Lord Calvert's natural good taste, though often misapplied, was by no means unimproved; and the very experiments which he made on the opinions of others, contributed to the correction of his own.

Many a fashion, of which he was vain of being the acknowledged inventor, fell into disuse under the shafts of his own criticism. But whilst his talents and his imagination were thus (however unworthily) kept in exercise, his heart lay torpid; for nothing sears the feelings so much as vanity and self-love.

Meanwhile, he was amused by as many passing flirtations as other young men usually are; and these were, as usual, divided into the two classes—of those whom he courted for fashion's sake, and those who courted him from the same motive. At last a very clever Italian succeeded in making him desperately in love with her, by

pretending to idolize him. She dismissed for his sake all his rivals, and soon after jilted him for a London merchant.

This shock was severe: and finding that the vacuum she left in his heart, or rather in his occupations, could not be supplied by the frivolous amusements of foppery, which had already begun to pall, he turned to the study of *virtù*; and was again excited, amused, imposed on, and disgusted.

The poison of flattery brings with it, sooner or later, its own antidote—distrust: Lord Calvert had now tried, in the short space of two years, most of those pursuits which are generally deemed the best incentives to happiness. At Venice, his gondola had received its garlands from many a shaded balcony. At Rome, there was scarcely a *mosaicista* or a *cicerone*, that had not solicited the patronage *dì sua eccellenza*. And at Vienna, his fiat was irreversible on all subjects connected with taste or literature. Nor did he, in the wide circuit of his travels, find any door closed against him,

from the saloon of the Marquis de Riviere to the palace of the Russian noble. But was this happiness?

By degrees he lost that contented reliance on his own judgment, which, even if it be a delusion, is one of the pleasantest. But in the same proportion as he doubted his own infallibility, he learned to distrust the sentiments of his associates; and had this temper of mind long continued, he might have degenerated into a suffering, heartless cynic. About this time, however, he became acquainted with a young man of nearly his own age, who soon contrived to reanimate, in his own favour, some of those feelings of friendship, which Lord Calvert had once spontaneously offered to all.

His new favourite, Lionel Fitzosborne, succeeded in giving a fresh impetus to his soul; and while he joined with him in railing at four-fifths of the world, and their pursuits, they mutually agreed that ambition was the only passion worthy the mind of man, and politics the only science deserving his attention.

A slight tincture of romance, and a considerable proportion of volatility, were amongst the various ingredients of Lord Calvert's character ; and both these facilitated his adoption of this novel system. He therefore returned to England, with his now inseparable companion, *blasé* on all the Continent had to offer ; doubtful of every merit, suspicious of every praise, and only anxious for an opportunity of asserting that independence of character, of which he had but lately learnt to be proud. But still, the very zeal with which he adopted the sentiments of his new friend, and the cordial and sincere regard with which he returned his professions of esteem, sufficiently proved that the cold calculations of diplomacy were only the external covering of a head still warm to every better impression ; and that if the world in general had lost its power of attraction, that heart might yet still vibrate to closer, and therefore to dearer sympathies.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE SCHEMER.

---

And so 'twill be when I am gone,  
Those tuneful bells will still ring on.

OLD SONG.

---

WHEN Lord Calvert had taken leave of Miss Fielding, the latter hastened to rejoin her father, to whom she fancied she had much to impart; for to have dined out without him, was an event in the monotonous history of her life. She playfully described Lord Calvert's sudden appearance, as if he had rode on the moonbeam, and as gaily commented on the tardy reminiscences of Sir Henry Moreton. Meanwhile, time passed by unnoticed; and it was late before she retired to the solitude of her own room, and to

wonder what could have tempted nurse to make that foolish observation to Lord Calvert.

The joy-bells of Fairton had not ceased their tuneful welcome to Lord Calvert, when the "first and second turn out" bore him and Mr. Fitzosborne with renovated speed towards Ellesmere Park. But who can describe the reception the travellers met on their arrival—the proud delight of paternal affection, that chastened the habitual dignity of the old Earl as he stood a little aside, looking with glistening eyes on his darling son; almost afraid to trust his voice, lest it should betray his emotion, and yet seeking to give vent to his happiness by the more than courteous reception of his son's friend—the unrepressed burst of feeling that prolonged his mother's embrace—the varying colour in Lady Matilda's cheek, as almost motionless she awaited her brother's recognition—and the gay sportiveness of Lady Louisa, that stole not unwelcome the premature caress? At that instant of natural and pleasurable emotion, Lord Calvert felt the links of domestic affection again

close round his heart. The chain had been lengthened till it was almost broken. It had swayed in the gust of every passion; yet still, though weakened, it was yet entire. Alas! that it should be the general lot of man to survive the better feelings of our nature; and to find that none grow with our growth, and strengthen with our strength, but those most likely to undermine our happiness!

Mr. Fitzosborne was by no means an uninterested spectator of this scene, although no change of countenance denoted sympathy. His feelings, naturally of the strongest kind, were yet so habitually under control, that they were like the attendant spirits waiting on another Prospero; never obtruding unbidden on their master, yet obedient to his slightest call; and while ready to assume to others any form he pleased, yet still remaining invisible to mortal ken, except when commanded to promote his revels, or aid the "insubstantial pageant."

Some writers have defined friendship to be self-love once removed; and have asserted the



necessity of certain resemblances in character, which elicit the reciprocal sympathies we dignify with that name. It would, however, have been difficult to trace the points of resemblance between Lord Calvert and his friend, at least in disposition—in situation they were not very dissimilar: for Lionel's father, Lord Tralee, was still alive; and there existed between him and his parent, if possible, still more resemblance than could be found between Earl Ellesmere and Lord Calvert.

The originals of the following letters are still extant, and illustrate this assertion:—

THE HON. MR. FITZOSBORNE TO  
LORD TRALEE.

“ I am sorry, my dear father, that circumstances prevented my writing to you sooner. I hope you got my hurried letter from Paris, stating that I had seen our ambassador; and that he perfectly agreed with you on the great advantage it would be to us to gain Lord Calvert, as the Ellesmere interest is so ex-

tended. I also hinted to him the cadetship for Thomas, in case we bring the stipulated quantity of votes. All pecuniary matters are finally arranged.

“ As to Lord Calvert, I begin to fear he is not quite so tractable as I had hoped. He is as volatile as we could wish ; and, with the most desirable inconsistency, prides himself on being peculiarly resolute. He is vain too ; and here are flatterers enough to persuade him of his own superexcellence. In short, though we have not been here a week yet, I can perceive that he is considered a little god in this neighbourhood ; and *tant mieux*, if his godship allows us to wield his thunderbolts. But there is the difficulty : Lord Calvert can only be guided, by being convinced that he is still ungoverned ; and unfortunately he has taken some lessons abroad that have wofully awakened his distrusts. I am quite sure I could *deter* him from doing anything ; but I am not so certain of having it in my power to direct his actions : however, difficulty but enhances the pleasures

of victory, and I have set my mind on being his Lordship's spiritual director.

“ Lord Ellesmere is the most impracticable old man I ever met with ; and I really do not think he would consent to his son being made President of the Council, if the dignity was to be purchased by the bribery of one of his blacksmiths. I do not think him at all a good example for Calvert, and therefore mean to get him away from this as soon as possible ; at the same time,

I rather tell thee what is to be fear'd,  
Than what I fear ; for always I am Cæsar.

“ Lady Ellesmere is quite an original, or rather an admirable copy of wives as they were in the time of Griselda : with strong prejudices, warm feelings, and cool temper, she is a great deal more perpendicular than the old tower at Ballyfoyle. Tell my mother she will never do in London : for though she has rank written in every angle of her contour, she never will have fashion.

“ I don’t forget your hint about Lord Calvert’s sisters ; and certainly I agree with you in thinking it a speculation not to be overlooked. But I think it right, my dear father, to tell you, that I cannot marry under twenty thousand. *Au reste*, I have as yet seen nothing to dislike in the girls ; they share between them most of the charms, and no doubt many of the faults of their sex. The youngest, whom I rather prefer, has “ heaven in her eye, grace in her steps ;” and Lady Matilda has, “ in every gesture, dignity and love.” Nevertheless, I don’t like to act precipitately, without being certain of the amount of their fortunes ; and even if the inquiries on that subject, which I have set on foot, turn out favourably, I think I shall leave this soon ; for this house is far too regular for anything like a flirtation. London, after all, is the only place to *filer* a courtship that is merely carried on from calculation ; and in very truth, I am almost tired of morality and Madeira : in a word, (“ tell it not in Gath”)—but they keep a woman cook !—I am sure I need not add, that

their wines are as strong-bodied as their coach, their roasts as massive as their plate; and that they go to church twice on a Sunday!

“*A-propos* to church. I had almost forgotten to tell you of a prize that is likely to fall in my way. Lord Calvert has promised to procure me a letter of introduction to Lord Alton, from a near relation of his, who is rector here; and this is a much better line of introduction than Lady Harriet Moreton; for Lord Alton, I am told, is such an old-fashioned man, that he might not perhaps relish his daughter’s recommendation of me under existing circumstances. I saw our friend in Cleveland Row for a moment, as I passed through town. There is every hope of Lord Alton’s coming in. Lady Harriet has been for some time urging her father to coalesce, and I suppose she has succeeded; for I understand she joined Sir Henry at the barracks yesterday. If Lord Calvert does not soon introduce me to Mr. Fielding the rector, I mean to get Lady Harriet to do so; for I understand he has great influence with Lord Alton, and,

perhaps, that would be a better channel than the other for the commissionership. This family are for ever talking of Mr. Fielding and his daughter. I can collect that he too is a difficult man ; but of course not so much so as Lord Ellesmere ; for Mr. Fielding has been across the Alps. I am much mistaken if there is not some design for Lord Calvert's marrying Miss Fielding, who is Lord Alton's niece : this connexion would considerably strengthen the Ellesmere interest, and of course make Lord Calvert the more valuable.

“ Love to Maria and Jenny. Is Betsy growing tall ? How do they like Colinet's quadrilles ? I am just going to ride *tête-à-tête* with the old Earl on purpose to sift him a little. The rest of the party are gone to Sir James Weldon's. After this proof of self-denial, I flatter myself, it is scarcely necessary to subjoin that I am

“ Your Lordship's obedient and dutiful

“ LIONEL FITZOSBORNE.”

The answer to this letter did not arrive for some days ; it ran as follows :—

DEAR LIONEL,

“ I have received yours of the 7th, and will attend to your hints about Lord A. and the c-m-s-ship.

“ Your discrimination of character is excellent. But do not commit yourself on paper, even to me. In writing, I always recommend initials ; mere speaking is not so dangerous, as it is no pledge without witnesses.

“ As I hope you will soon be enlisted in the *corps diplomatique*, let me recommend a few hints for your consideration.

“ Be not diffuse in your style. Never turn over leaf in a letter if it can possibly be avoided : it is always assumed that men in office have no leisure. Write on large paper to a minister, and on note-paper to his secretary ; the first looks respectful, the second confidential.

“ Above all things, don't draw your similes from Ballyfoyle. Ireland should never be quoted

on this side the Channel, except in Parliament.

“This reminds me of Nurse M’Clane. Her husband was again here for money; I gave him ten pounds on your account; they are very troublesome and importunate.

“I understand your hint about money. You have executed my commissions well, and I therefore send you the enclosed cheque. It is entered on the books as secret service money.

“Your affectionate

“T——

“Better never make your full signature common.”

Lord Tralee’s frequent admonitions to his son were by no means thrown away upon him; and in addition to the advantages of both precept and example, Nature in many respects had admirably qualified Lionel Fitzosborne for a proficiency in those arts most frequently recommended to his attention. To a singularly hand-



some figure, she had added the most insinuating voice ; it was in truth

————— Harmony's refined part  
Stealing, whilst it seem'd to languish,  
Full upon the list'ner's heart.

The outline of his physiognomy was eminently beautiful ; but the expression of his countenance was grave almost to melancholy. His complexion had that degree of pallidness which gave additional interest to his general appearance ; yet it seemed the result rather of study than of delicacy, as the brilliancy of his almost dazzling eyes, and the contrast of his dark and curling hair, dispelled every idea of languor or disease.

Thus formed to captivate, with a figure commanding from its height, and manners irresistible from their refinement, it was impossible for him to be overlooked in any society ; and whilst he possessed that subtle penetration that rendered him intuitively acquainted with the characters of almost all with whom he associ-

ated, he equally possessed that happy art of not only attracting the attention of others, but of obtaining their applause. Such was Lionel Fitzosborne: and when he proposed to Lord Ellesmere to accompany him in his ride to Fairton, the old Earl felt gratified at the preference of his society, and involuntarily expressed his admiration of "so young a man having escaped the contagion of the age, and returned even from Italy with undiminished respect for his seniors."

Lord Ellesmere having proposed to his companion that they should call at the rectory on their return from Broomhill Barracks, Mr. Fitzosborne with truth assured him, that no arrangement would better suit his wishes; and the conversation naturally turned on the two families they intended visiting.

"I called on Sir Henry Moreton on my way down," said Lionel carelessly; "but unfortunately he was then at Sir James Weldon's."

"Then you, of course, are acquainted

with Lady Harriet?" inquired Lord Ellesmere.

"Oh! I have known her many years—almost from my childhood."

As Fitzosborne said this, he turned with a winning smile to Lord Ellesmere, while his dark eye flashed as it rested on the unsuspecting countenance of the venerable old man. Was the radiance of that smile designed to baffle scrutiny? or was that kindling glance sent to penetrate beneath the placid surface, and trace if even an incipient doubt was there?

"Now, do tell me in confidence, Mr. Fitzosborne," continued the Earl, with guileless curiosity, "what sort of a person is Lady Harriet Moreton?"

"She is a great favourite of mine," rejoined Lionel, laughing. "And so she ought to be, for her acquaintance was particularly sought out for me by my father."

"Excellent young man!" no doubt thought Lord Ellesmere; for he was not probably then aware that in days gone by—days of compara-

tive innocence to Lionel, his wily father had, from cold, unfeeling, calculating policy, exposed his son to all the flattering blandishments of a lovely but a dangerous woman, merely because that woman was the daughter of a statesman whom he could not otherwise approach.

“ I have always heard that Lady Harriet Moreton was a very captivating creature,” resumed the Earl with earnestness. “ But you know there have been many contradictory reports concerning her ; and I want you to tell me in very truth, do you think Lady Ellesmere may, or ought to visit her ? ”

“ Since you ask me in confidence,” almost whispered Lionel, leaning forward to be close to Lord Ellesmere’s ear, “ I must confess that her conduct was very imprudent in her first husband’s time ; and though he certainly treated her infamously, yet I am sure, my dear Lord, you agree with me in thinking a woman should never give room for scandal, even from imprudence.”

“ I wish all young men thought as you do,

Mr. Fitzosborne. But perhaps her conduct was only imprudent; and if so, she is to be pitied at least as much as blamed."

"As for my opinion, Lord Ellesmere, I always thought that it was her consciousness of innocence that made her so unguarded."

"Poor thing!" ejaculated the Earl; "but how has she conducted herself since she married Sir Henry? You mix so much more in the world than I do, that——"

"But your Lordship will in half an hour be a much better judge than I can possibly be. I am not so intimate with Sir Henry as I was with General Warder; but as far as appearances go, I never saw a happier couple than she and Sir Henry."

"Mr. Fielding tells me," resumed the Earl, "that Lord Alton's whole heart is fixed on his daughter. You know Mr. Fielding is heir to Lord Alton's title; and besides, Mrs. Fielding and Lady Harriet's mother were sisters."

"Is Mr. Fielding very intimate with Lord Alton?" inquired Fitzosborne, adding, in a tone

of indifference, "See, Lord Ellesmere, what a beautiful picture that herd of deer would make with those old oaks in the back-ground!"

Lord Ellesmere was proud of his oaks, which he thought the finest in England; but imperceptibly, he scarcely knew how, he found himself again talking, not of them, but of Mr. Fielding.

"I believe Mr. Fielding has more influence with Lord Alton than any other individual has."

"Then, of course, out of friendship for Mr. Fielding, your Lordship is anxious that Lord Alton should come in?"

"I should be exceedingly sorry to see Lord Alton prime minister, if I thought his patronage would rest on any basis but that of the public good."

"Perhaps Mr. Fielding's political principles do not accord with those of his Lordship? Sometimes those little differences are not incompatible with private friendship."

"I can scarcely claim the honour of being acquainted with Lord Alton; but from all I

have heard of him, I really believe his principles are the same as those of Mr. Fielding—the true principles which ought to influence every individual who can claim a birth-right in the English Constitution.”

“Then of course, if Lord Alton comes in, he will have the incalculable advantage of your Lordship’s support?”

“Not for one measure—not for one moment longer than my conviction lasts of both his capability and his disinterestedness.” Lionel stared, and smiled, and listened to every word. “The English Constitution, sir, is a beautiful edifice—alike the intrenchment and the trophy of English liberty. But it is only cemented by the masterly equilibrium of its respective parts; and the minister who attempts to throw extraneous weight on any, must infallibly endanger the whole.”

Poor Lord Ellesmere had opened on an endless theme. He talked of Magna Charta, whilst his auditor thought of the leaning tower of Pisa. And perchance neither the recollec-

tions of the one nor the calculations of the other would have come to an end till now, had not both been happily terminated by their arrival at Broomhill Barracks.



## CHAPTER V.

## A WOMAN OF FASHION.

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That thou art *blamed* shall not be thy defeat,  
For slander's mark was ever yet the fair.

SHAKSPEARE'S SONNET.

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LORD ELLESMERE left his companion at the entrance to the barrack-yard; Mr. Fitzosborne having there met his two friends, Captain Brisbane and Mr. Jessop, who were smoking their cigars at the great gates, in that happy state of listless inactivity which is peculiarly characteristic of country-quarters.

The Earl having passed up a narrow, but

lightsome staircase, was ushered into an apartment, which at one glance convinced him that even a barrack-room may be made to assume the tone of its temporary inhabitants. Nothing could be plainer than the materials of its furniture—nothing more studied than its selection and arrangement. An affectation of simplicity, and even homeliness, was perceptible throughout ; but this very affectation betrayed at once luxury and taste—congenial alike to the habits, manners, and pursuits of a professed votary of fashion.

The walls of the room were unpapered ; but the chastened brown of the distemper with which they were coloured, heightened the effect of some *chefs-d'œuvres* both of prints and drawings, which, in their dazzling frames, hung round them in apparent disorder, but in reality with the most judicious care, that each should shine in its own appropriate light. If the floor was carpeted with common baize, and the windows hung with still commoner muslin, the one was covered with an almost countless variety

of seats and tables; and the others were shaded by a profusion of the choicest and sweetest flowers. Here, a camp-stool was placed in somewhat ostentatious comparison with a *fau-teuil* loaded with the softest cushions. In another part of the room, a many-coloured, but showy horse-cloth was spread on a deal-table, whose naked and substantial legs were scarcely sufficient to support the weight of gold plate displayed thereon. In short, from the chimney-piece, with its unpainted shelf and ormoulu time-piece, to the tiger's skin that lay at the threshold, every object in the room designated that degree of plainness that belonged to a barrack, and that degree of refinement which is inseparable from an elegant woman. She brings with her an atmosphere peculiarly her own; and it is immaterial in what situation its genial influence is found: in every land, in every home, that influence is irresistible.

On Lord Ellesmere's entrance, he found Sir Henry Moreton standing at a window engaged

in conversation with another gentleman, and Lady Harriet seated at a table at the opposite end of the room. She was busily employed copying music: near her, was an officious little officer, on the alert to mend her pens, ring her *bijou* hand-bell, or do any other such little service as her Ladyship condescended to accept. Major Crosbie was also in waiting; but he had chosen the easier part, and paid his tribute of attention by leisurely and silently turning over the leaves of a huge album, where caricatures, and elegies, and advertisements, and bons-mots, and proof-prints, and original compositions, promised recreation to every variety of intellect.

At first, Lady Harriet scarcely raised her eyes from her music-book; but after Sir Henry, with all the ceremony of the *vieille cour*, formally presented her new visitor to her Ladyship, she turned those shaded eyes full upon Lord Ellesmere, and he could not help internally acknowledging that he had seldom seen any half so beautiful.

It was probably to those eyes that Lady Harriet Moreton owed that reputation for beauty, which, in fact, was nothing more than a universal acknowledgment of her powers of attraction, and these were in truth undeniable. But except in her eyes, there was nothing particularly remarkable in her appearance: for grace, however perceptible, is always indefinable.

In figure, Lady Harriet Moreton was rather below the middle size; and though her lip was fresh, and her teeth were brilliant, yet a fastidious critic might have said her complexion was too sallow, except when enlivened by rouge. Critics, however, were not often found, at least when those fascinating eyes were near to beam on them. And whilst her flatterers declared that her feet and fingers were models of perfection, even her enemies, if such she had, declared her to be always the best-dressed woman in Europe.

Perhaps the good old Earl was not exactly the judge that Lady Harriet would have selected

to pass sentence, either on her costume or her beauty. But even he was not proof against the witchery of the combination, whatever it might have been ; and before ten minutes had elapsed, he found himself almost unconsciously considering how much his wife and daughters would be delighted with this new acquaintance.

There is a spell no tongue may speak,  
No hand may trace, no heart may dare ;  
A charm we scarcely wish to break ;  
A power all feel, but none declare.

Meanwhile, Sir Henry Moreton failed not to make likewise a favourable impression on Lord Ellesmere. His manners combined somewhat of the frankness of his profession, with much of a courtier's refinement. He could talk of county politics with the Earl, as learnedly as he discussed gastronomy with Mr. Warburton, or Abernethy's lectures with Lady Weldon ; and when Mr. Fitzosborne joined the party, he found his Lordship unfeignedly delighted with

the acquisition to the neighbourhood of the Colonel and his Lady.

Thus favourably impressed with both, Lord Ellesmere noticed with pleasure the gay and unembarrassed salutation with which Lady Harriet greeted Lionel; and the no less friendly warmth with which Sir Henry welcomed him by a protracted shake of the hand, with the apparent cordiality of a blunt honest soldier. "Ah! I see Fitzosborne's right; I never met a happier couple than these seem to be."

So thought Lord Ellesmere. His Lordship's *fort* was not penetration; and besides, he never had read Lavater: so he neither perceived the fixedness with which Sir Henry's teeth were clenched, at the moment that he grasped Fitzosborne's hand; nor the momentary contraction of his bushy eyebrows, as he glanced past him towards Lady Harriet. All this was lost upon Lord Ellesmere; and he took his leave, fully convinced of the connubial happiness enjoyed by this "worthy pair."

“Pity anything should ever have been whispered against Lady Harriet, for she is certainly a charming woman.” A smile of benevolence played on the Earl’s countenance when he made this observation, as they turned their horses towards Fairton Bridge.

“Very true,” rejoined Fitzosborne; “and it is possible the tale of scandal may have been owing as much to her merits as her faults.”

Lord Ellesmere, unlike many of his cotemporaries, was obstinate only in his political character: in private life he was always willing to be pleased; and on this occasion he found a new reason for esteeming his youthful companion, who appeared to be equally lenient in judging the conduct of others, as he seemed irreproachable in his own. But still Lady Harriet Moreton was uppermost in his thoughts.

“I trace a strong resemblance,” continued he, “between her and Julia Fielding, particularly in their eyes; Julia, however, is a great many years younger than Lady Harriet. She is much taller too, and fairer; and I think Julia



is even more elegant, though unquestionably by no means so fashioned."

"Somewhat a dangerous neighbour, I should think," rejoined Lionel, smiling: but as it is the fashion of the present day for young men rather to seek than to avoid danger, this reflection but made Lionel proportionably more anxious to arrive at Mr. Fielding's; and whilst Lord Ellesmere stopped at every turn of the approach, to point out the beautiful views that successively presented themselves, his impatient companion gave loud assent to his reiterated praise, and inward malediction to the tediousness of the ride.

On their entrance, the grey-headed butler, who had been in the habit of admitting Lord Ellesmere for half a century, left the two gentlemen to find their way alone to the library, whilst he, with pleased alacrity, went to inform Mr. Fielding of their arrival.

"Now you shall see my paragon," observed Lord Ellesmere, as he opened the well-known door; and the next instant he exclaimed to his

son, " Eh, Calvert ! what, are you here ? I thought you were gone with your mother to Lady Weldon's."

Lord Calvert laughed. Fitzosborne thought he almost coloured : he however stammered something in reply to his father, about his having promised to meet his mother and sisters at the rectory ; and then leisurely continued his occupation of sorting music. It was nevertheless evident that, although the couch on which he sat was covered with a sufficiency of music to employ hours to assort, his exertions in its arrangement, however strenuous, were but recent ; for his glove lay on the table beside Julia, with a half-finished sketch of the same flower she was copying—" herself the fairest flower : " for never was youth and innocence clad in a fairer form.

She was seated at her favourite employment in the recess of the large Gothic window. The day was hot ; and possibly to that circumstance might be attributed the dazzling brilliancy of her complexion. A single ray of light had

found its way through the screen of tangled jasmine, and, resting on her auburn hair, threw the shadow of its ringlets on her mantling cheek, whilst her open forehead and rosy mouth needed no accidental illumination.

So thought Fitzosborne; at least, so his protracted gaze seemed to imply. But his address betrayed no emotion; his countenance was as unmoved as mere politeness would prescribe; and if his voice was soft, as its harmonious accents broke upon the ear, when were its tones other than mellifluous?—when were his manners other than attractive?

In a few moments they were joined by Mr. Fielding; and Lionel saw, not unmoved, his strong resemblance to Lord Alton. But even this recommendation to Fitzosborne was unnecessary; his respect was sufficiently ensured, by the imposing figure of the venerable clergyman.

“We are just returned from visiting your niece, Fielding,” said Lord Ellesmere: “Lady Harriet Moreton seems a delightful woman.”

"I am almost sorry you have anticipated me," replied Mr. Fielding. "Julia and I called, but she was not then arrived; to-morrow we mean to repeat our visit."

"Then do take me with you," gaily interrupted Lord Calvert: "it is not fair that I should be the only one of the party unacquainted with my father's *delightful woman*."

"Assuredly, Calvert, you are usually not slow in cultivating the acquaintance of pretty women," said Fitzosborne; and he unconsciously glanced towards Julia.

"Well, trust me," replied the Earl, "Lady Harriet is one of the loveliest I know; I must not tell Miss Julia how strong their resemblance is."

"The more reason for my visiting her," rejoined Lord Calvert; "and I shall, therefore, introduce myself to her Ladyship within this hour. Fitzosborne, I'll tell her you sent me. And here, *bellissima mia*," continued he, turning to Julia, and catching up his hat and

gloves, "pray take care of my embryo drawing: when may I come again for another lesson?"

Mr. Fielding stared; Julia blushed as she half drew up in offended dignity, and half laughed at his infectious gaiety. But he stopped not to see at which point the balance would rest, and clearing with one spring the ponderous *fauteuil* that stood between him and the door, he exclaimed, "*A rivederla*," and was in a moment out of hearing.

Lord Ellesmere, whose ideas of etiquette differed in many respects from those of his son, began an elaborate apology for Lord Calvert's rudeness; whilst Fitzosborne, in a whisper, expressed his surprise, that any thing could tempt his friend to such an abrupt departure. Julia was silent; but a placid smile played over her countenance, as her father replied in the tone of almost parental affection, "My dear Lord, how can you wish him to be altered in any thing? When he called on me as he passed through Fairton the other evening, I

could not help thinking how little Lord Calvert had been spoilt by the world."

It was now Fitzosborne's turn to smile, but nobody could imagine that he did so, on hearing this observation; for, at that moment, he was telling Julia of the newest invention in pencils, and no person could address her with other than a smiling countenance. Meanwhile, Lord Ellesmere was inquiring why Mr. Fielding and Julia had allowed nearly a fortnight to pass without visiting Ellesmere. This was soon explained by accidental circumstances; but so strange did this unwonted absence appear to all the Earl's family, that not only had Lord Calvert returned daily to the rectory to inquire the cause, but the Countess and her daughters had that morning transmitted through him an earnest entreaty that Julia and her father would spend some days at the Park, in welcome of Lord Calvert's return; a promise which Lionel now gladly heard reiterated.

A host must be very uninteresting or a guest exceedingly dull, if the respective merits of

each are not discussed the moment their relative situation ceases; and accordingly Mr. and Miss Fielding afforded ample subject of conversation to Lord Ellesmere and his companion during their ride; the Earl entered warmly into a comparison between Julia and Lady Harriet Moreton, still, however, giving the preference to the former, whilst Lionel more than insinuated his superior admiration of her cousin.

They had scarcely emerged from the shade of Mr. Fielding's woods when they espied a cavalcade crossing Fairton bridge on the road towards Ellesmere. Lady Harriet Moreton was easily distinguished even from a distance, by her *manége* seat on horseback; and in assiduous attendance at her bridle bells, rode the gay, the volatile Lord Calvert.

The two equestrian parties soon joined into one, and the Earl scarcely knew whether to laugh at or to resent the uncereemonious manner in which his son rallied him, on having at present gained the vantage-ground.

“ You see Lord Calvert is rather undisciplined,” said the Earl, almost in apology to Sir Henry, who was riding with some other officers a little in the rear.

“ Oh, my Lord! we have just discovered that Lord Calvert is an old acquaintance. It seems we passed a day together at Martigny, shut up in a Swiss shower of rain.”

“ And a shower of rain in the Alps is not to be braved with impunity. But I was not aware of my son ever having had the honour of meeting you.”

“ Oh! that is easily accounted for. You know it is very much the fashion abroad to travel without the trouble and parade of one’s own equipage; and, in fact, Lady Harriet and I were travelling incognito, and we did not happen to hear Lord Calvert’s name till after we had left Martigny. *A-propos*, Mr. Fitzosborne——” and Sir Henry reined back his horse a little, perhaps as well to avoid answering interrogations as to have an opportunity of making them——“ *à-propos*, what is become of



Lord Calvert's pretty travelling companion?" and the conversation was continued *sotto voce*.

By this time, they were arrived at the turn of the river where the roads to Ellesmere and Weldon House divide, and at this point they met Lady Ellesmere and her daughters, who were just returning from their morning's drive. Lord Calvert, whose movements were any thing but deliberate, in a few minutes outstripped the rest of the party, and before they had overtaken him, he had told his mother that Lady Harriet Moreton was delightful—that he had promised that '*they*,' meaning the Countess and her daughters, should go to Lady Harriet's apartments in a day or two, to hear the regimental band, which was reckoned finer than that of the *corps de garde*; and before poor Lady Ellesmere had let down her eyebrows from the utmost altitude of surprise, she found herself recovering from the obtuse angle into which her figure had declined in acknowledgment of the Earl's introduction to the fair stranger.

The whole matter was soon arranged, apparently to the satisfaction of all parties, though, on retrospection, nobody recollected exactly how it happened.

“And now, my Lord,” said Lady Harriet, turning to the Earl with one of her sweetest smiles, “you told me so much this morning about my cousin, Julia Fielding, that I am quite impatient to make her acquaintance; do you think I might take the liberty of asking her to meet Lady Ellesmere?”

“I can assure you Mr. Fielding and Julia are no less anxious to be introduced to your Ladyship. Mr. Fitzosborne and I are just returned from hearing them say so.”

“Then, Fitzosborne, will you take my strange invitation? it is too informal to be written.”

“I am always at your Ladyship’s commands; but my friend Calvert knows the road to the rectory better than I do.”

Lionel said this with a provoking air of *insouciance*, and a momentary flush suffused Lord Calvert’s countenance. He retorted, how-

ever, by assuring Lady Harriet that he was not less anxious than Fitzosborne to be enlisted in her service."

"Well then, Lord Calvert," interrupted Sir Henry, with an air of frankness and *bonhomie*, which he well knew how and when to assume, "as I have known Miss Fielding even longer than Mr. Fitzosborne has, will you accompany me to the rectory, and we can together deliver Lady Harriet's message? I have also one to give to Mr. Fielding from Lord Alton."

Lord Calvert seemed less pleased at this arrangement than any other of the company. Was it caprice, or some more complicated feeling, which at that moment was lord of the ascendant? Fitzosborne watched his changing countenance; but his own remained unmoved; and the good old Earl only noticing his son's acquiescence in Sir Henry's proposal, smiled as he thought of the readiness Lord Calvert seemed to show in returning to her, from whom he had so lately parted.

There they all separated; Lionel and Lord

Ellesmere escorted the Countess and her daughters homewards, whilst Lady Harriet, Major Crosbie, and Captain Brisbane, took the road to Weldon House.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE LUNCHEON.

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I'm sure by all here present 'tis allow'd  
Nothing in London takes without a crowd.  
—— To feast—to mask—assembly, or review,  
Where our forefathers and foremothers too  
Went, poor dull souls! to please and to be pleased,  
*We*, more enlighten'd, go to squeeze and to be squeezed.

WM. SPENCER.

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IN every country-house, similarly circumstanced to that of Sir James Weldon, luncheon is an object of the utmost importance; it is in fact the only good substitute for a billiard-table, with which it has some valuable properties in common. Like it, luncheon is—

A preparation for visitors :

An inducement to visitors :

A succedaneum for visitors :

A consolation to visitors :

and above all,

An employment for visitors.

In addition to these undeniable advantages, by the help of reiterated luncheons repeated with every succeeding guest, Lady Weldon followed her physician's prescription, to eat little and often, and was at the same time enabled at dinner *de se faire valoir sur sa petite santé*, with incredible effect, and but little self-denial. Nor were her daughters less aware of the advantages of this important meal. Many a partner at a ball, or a companion in a ride, had they owed less to their own charms than to the merits of a *Périgord* ; and accordingly, the welcome toll of the luncheon-bell generally sounded the knell of departing *papillotes*, and welcomed their entrance, clad in smiles, and *très bien crépés*.

The fragments of one of Lady Weldon's best luncheons were rapidly disappearing under the

vigorous attacks of the unrelenting Miss Hackerley. In vain the antiquated governess sat staring at her in silent despair, or occasionally threw out hints of the fineness of the day, and the probability of other guests arriving. In vain one of the younger girls, with exaggerated civility, piled plate after plate in malicious anxiety to ascertain how much the insatiable old maid could devour. Miss Hackerley lived four miles off; and she had just “stepped over” for the express purpose of paying her devoirs to Lady Weldon and a *galantine* simultaneously; contemplating with equal gratification the refreshment of a few peaches and a little scandal. Such are the delights of country visiting on a summer morning!

Miss Weldon was reclining in an arm-chair, looking sentimental to the utmost of her power; an open book in her hand, and her eyes wandering alternately from it to Miss Hackerley, and from Miss Hackerley to the open window that looked out upon the approach.

In another part of the room, Lady Weldon

was infinitely more engrossed by her occupation than her daughter appeared to be. She was dressed with not less care, as her French cap gloried in an unusual quantity of Valenciennes. French ribbons streamed around her in all directions; and her usual preparation for company, a nervous head-ache, was announced by a due assortment of *vinaigrettes* and *eau-de-luce* bottles. Ensconced in a capacious arm-chair, a full-blown double dalia twirling in one hand, whilst a glittering reticule was suspended from the other, she listened with equal attention and complacency to certain interesting details, which Mr. Warburton not unwillingly communicated.

“And who is this young man whom Lord Calvert has brought home with him? A travelling tutor I suppose, or speculating *dilettante*?”

“Excuse me, Lady Weldon, the Honourable Lionel Fitzosborne, only son to Lord Tralee; the gentleman you allude to is one of the first matches in England.”

“Dear me! Mr. Warburton, you don’t say



so? Sir James is so odd—never calls upon anybody. Are you in your gig or on horseback? Perhaps you would return through Ellesmere Park, it is not above two miles round to Posy Lodge, and you could then do me the very great favour to leave Sir James's name for this young man. We must ask him to dinner; is he musical?"

"I shall be delighted to do your Ladyship's behests at all times, especially on this occasion, for you know a match is going on with him and one of the Ladies Calvert; at least so report says; but pray don't give me for your authority——"

"Oh! that is what Lord Calvert brought him down for, is it? I thought there was something of the kind going on; however, we may ask him once nevertheless. And which of the young ladies is the bride elect?"

"Upon my honour, my dear Lady Weldon, I can't tell; now don't look as if you did not credit what I say. You know I am very intimate at Ellesmere Park, and his Lordship might think me unkind."

“ At all events, Mr. Warburton, he must consider you discreet. And do you think our dear, proud, pragmatical Countess will manage her son’s match as well as she has got off her daughter ?”

“ You mean with Miss Fielding, I suppose ?”

“ *Cela va sans dire* ; you know she is the greatest heiress (in expectation at least) in this county. *My* daughters, to be sure, have thirty thousand pounds a-piece, paid down—settled on them : But then they are not nieces to Lord Alton ; and you know, Mr. Warburton, a girl does not require a dancing-master, if her uncle is prime minister.”

Mr. Warburton looked as if he did not like to hear his favourite Julia Fielding spoken of so slightly. But if any reproof rose to his mind, it had not time to escape his lips, ere Anna Weldon ran into the room out of breath, exclaiming, “ Here they are ! here they are !” and at the same time a chariot drove up to the door.

“ It is only that eternal Mrs. Masham !” ob-

served Miss Weldon, retiring after her peep from behind the window-curtain, at the same time neutralizing her look of disappointment by her tone of indifference.

And now succeeded the pleasing interlude of receiving a new visitor. Questions were asked and left unanswered. Lady Weldon's headache stood the test of half-a-dozen voices speaking at once; chairs were drawn to the luncheon-table, whilst the carriage was drawn into the stable-yard; and by degrees the conversation subsided into a minute account of the Boyle Farm *fête*, as read out from a letter received that morning by Mrs. Masham from "the bishop and my sister."

" 'Six carriages and four provided *en cas des enlèvemens*!' What a delightful place London must be! And here I declare is Lady Harriet Moreton too, and all the officers!"

"Can you tell me, Mr. Warburton, has Lady Ellesmere visited her yet?" whispered Miss Hackerley; but as there was no time for an answer, she slipped into the back-ground,

determined in any case to see and hear ; and finally, to act as circumstances might render advisable—for Miss Hackerley, as old maids usually are, was rigorously tenacious on the subject of reputation.

No two individuals could differ more from each other, than Lady Harriet Moreton differed from herself, as contrasted with what she now appeared in Lady Weldon's drawing-room, to what she had seemed that very morning to Lord Ellesmere. There is a free-masonry about rank and real fashion, that is at once intelligible to every member of the same society. And even though the old Earl's notions of etiquette were rather antiquated, they were still, like last year's kalendar, a court-guide, though somewhat out of date. To him, therefore, Lady Harriet Moreton had no need to assume any artificial character. Her very simplicity of manner was in truth refinement, both of tact and elegance ; and the frequent observation " that she was a delightful woman," which almost unconsciously broke from Lord Ellesmere, sufficiently at-

tested that she had succeeded in her wish of obtaining his approbation.

Lady Harriet knew, as well as Miss Hackeley did, that her reputation trembled on the beam, and to regain that dimmed jewel was now the first object of her ambition. To be popular, therefore was her aim. But she was aware that the means to be used for the attainment of this end, should be as various as the substances from which the essence was to be distilled. She had been "at home" when Lady Weldon and her daughters first called on her, and a glance at their costume had given her an insight into their characters. She was fully aware that one degree too little of condescension would irritate their pride; one degree too much of familiarity would lessen their respect; and she therefore came to return their visit, fully prepared to awe them into admiration by the haughtiness of her courtesy.

With as little loss of time as possible, Mrs. Masham returned to the subject of her sister's letter, offering to read out once more the latest

news from town. But she had not proceeded far, when Lady Harriet, in the most cordial manner possible, (for Mrs. Masham's physiognomy was cordiality itself,) set her right in a few trifling particulars; adding, as apology, that she had herself been an eye-witness of those wonders. Miraculously did this casual observation increase the respect of her auditors. Miss Hackerley's curiosity was more than ever awakened; and even Anna Weldon left Captain Brisbane to eat his pine-apple jelly in peace, and drew her chair nearer to Lady Harriet, to listen whilst she talked of London.

"I hope we shall often have the pleasure of meeting your Ladyship in town, next spring," drawled out Lady Weldon; "I mean to take my daughters out in April."

Lady Harriet made a gracious bow; it was so civil, that Lady Weldon ventured to add, "London is on so large a scale, that it is possible to have many acquaintances, and but very few associates."

"My sister writes me word," briskly rejoined

Mrs. Masham, "that society in town was more exclusive last year than ever. Miss Hackerley gave a loud "Hem," and moved her chair backwards.

"We are all in sets in town," observed Lady Harriet; "*à-propos*, I had the pleasure of meeting your sister very often in Hyde Park. I think I saw her, too, once at Almack's—no—not at Almack's, but at the Caledonian ball, which you know is held at Almack's rooms; I hope the good old Bishop is better."

Mrs. Masham by no means approved of the first part of this speech, but there was a tone of kindness in the latter query, that was quite irresistible.

"I have sometimes thought," said Lady Weldon, with a half-suppressed sigh, "of taking my daughters to Paris. Society is so much more attainable abroad than in London."

The moment the word Paris was mentioned, Mr. Warburton considered himself peculiarly addressed. He therefore replied, with his

usual attention to politeness, “ Beg a thousand pardons, Lady Weldon, if I venture to differ from your Ladyship ; but Paris is *not* the thing for young ladies. If you take ’em there fresh from England, they are too new—if you stop there coming back from Italy, they are *fanées*——”

“ I am sure, mamma,” interrupted Anna Weldon, “ I should not like to go to Paris at all. There is your friend, Lady Jennyborough, has brought back her five large daughters unmarried, and you know they speak seven languages a-piece.”

Captain Brisbane stared — Lady Harriet smiled—Mr. Warburton whispered, “ Cause and effect”—and Mrs. Masham good-humouredly attempted to turn the conversation.

“ I always understood from my sister, that nothing was so easy as to get married at Paris. I remember she told me that when she was there, (the Bishop and my sister were six weeks at Paris, they lived in the Place Vendôme,) a French Count came to a friend of the Bishop’s



to ask him to carry a proposal from him to marry Mrs. Altamont, for he had never heard or seen any thing of her husband; and when was told that Colonel Altamont was then in Paris, he said, ' Either of Mrs. Altamont's daughters would suit equally as well as herself,' so I cannot conceive how Lady Jenny-borough so mismanaged the matter."

" Now, Lady Harriet, may I ask your opinion: Do you think Paris is as difficult as London?"

" I believe the society in both, entirely depends on the first introduction; but Paris has this disadvantage, that its English company is always fluctuating. I have heard many people say, that all their exertions in one year will not insure their situation in the society of the next. But I think it is just possible to become one of us in London, provided certain conditions are fulfilled."

" And pray, Lady Harriet, what *are* those conditions?" eagerly demanded the two Misses Weldon at once.

“First, I consider an apprenticeship of at least fourteen years——”

“La! I expect to be married before then, he! he! he!” exclaimed the vivacious Anna.

“Then, Lady Weldon, you must buy a house in a good situation, for we never consider the inhabitants of a hired house as residents; and we never admit into our set any persons that are not residents, except foreigners or Irish beauties.”

“I believe Sir James intends to buy a house, for we think nothing of expense.”

“Oh, of course! you know good dinners, good balls, good horses, good dresses, good looks, and even good fortunes, go for nothing; the difficulty is a small party of about two or three hundred, with nothing but good company.”

“I am sure I feel quite grateful to your Ladyship for the kind interest you take in us. And now tell me, is there no way of getting into this good company?”

“It is difficult, but I do not say it is impos-

sible. In the first place, you must get a clever sponsor ; some poor dowager, who will take the responsibility of spending your money and regulating your visiting list. I believe the Dowager Duchess of Durham is to be had, now that Miss Green is married."

"And would she present us at court?"

"Yes, on certain terms."

"And get us to Almack's?"

"No; I am afraid that is beyond her. Not that Almack's either is quite unattainable, but it is managed in a different way. Your eldest daughter, Lady Weldon, is the proper height; but, if I recollect right, we last year decided on not having too many blondes. However, all that business is settled more in reference to beaux than belles. An elder son of an old family sometimes gets tickets for very ugly sisters, though he would not think of asking any for either a governor or a maternal."

"And I am afraid, Lady Harriet, there is little use in going to London unless we go to Almack's. Are there any other requisites for being in good company?"

“So many, that several people are occasionally seen in good company without being considered good company themselves. But I should tire you to death if I told you all our caprices; and,” added she, rising, “I have almost forgotten one purport of my visit: your friend, Lady Ellesmere, has promised to come to me on Thursday, to hear the regimental band, and I am anxious to prevail on you *all* to come to meet her.” As she said this, Lady Harriet looked on each side, as if to include Mrs. Masham and Mr. Warburton, with both of whom she was already acquainted.

Meantime, at this mention of the Countess, Miss Hackerley’s little gray eyes had grown rounder and rounder, and she was the first to return Lady Harriet’s invitation, by an assenting curtsy. Nor was the curtsy nor the stare diminished, when Lady Harriet added, “Sir Henry Moreton was actually on his road hither, to make his own request to Sir James Weldon, for the honour of his company likewise; but Lord Calvert insisted on his turning back with him, to see my uncle Fielding.”

So saying, Lady Harriet took her departure, leaving, as Sir Peter Teazle did, her character behind her.

Anna Weldon declared “she was very kind.”—Miss Weldon thought her “very fashionable.”—Miss Hackerley, appropriating her invitation to herself, said she was “very civil.”—Mrs. Masham described her as “very agreeable.”—Lady Weldon confessed she was “very sensible.”—And Mr. Warburton asserted that she was “very beautiful.” But all, though with different modifications, concurred with Lord Ellesmere in his original opinion, that “Lady Harriet Moreton was a very delightful woman.”

## CHAPTER VII.

## FIRST LOVE.

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All joys upon him ! for he is my friend.  
Wonder not that I call a man so young my friend ;  
His worth is great.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

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IF Lady Harriet Moreton thus occupied the thoughts and tongues of the party she had met at Weldon House, she was no less the subject of conversation with the inhabitants of Ellesmere Park.

“ A very unceremonious introduction indeed,” observed Lady Ellesmere, in measured

tones, as she and her daughters sat in daily state, waiting after dinner the return of the gentlemen to the drawing-room. There was no need to specify to whom she alluded, as she spoke to the meditations of both her auditors.

“And yet dear papa seemed quite pleased both with her and her invitation.”

“Oh! strange as the invitation was, I really could not refuse it—I was taken quite un-awares. And, indeed, I saw by my Lord’s face that he rather wished us to go. And yet I must say I never met with such a thing before. To be sure, how fashions do alter!”

“Dear mamma, won’t it be quite delightful!” exclaimed Lady Louisa, who had not yet spoken. “Only think, Matilda, of our getting leave to go to the barracks at last. Is the parade a room, I wonder?”

“I hope that dearest Julia will be there: she will be so pleased with the band.”

“Matilda, you must make a conquest of some person or other—no matter who. That

tall officer with black eyes, whom we saw at church, for instance."

"Fie, Louisa! how you do go on!" and Lady Matilda coloured, as she drew up, partly from modesty and partly from pride.

"Fie, Louisa! how can you think of officers at church!" exclaimed Lady Ellesmere, who had not for some years been to St. James's chapel.

"Nay, Matilda, it is only for your sake that I am so much on the *qui-vive*. You know how Anna Weldon the other day laughed at the young lady who was past twenty, and said she had never had an offer. I think verily she intended the remark for the benefit of your Ladyship."

Very fortunately, Lady Ellesmere did not hear this last observation. Her thoughts had again wandered to Lady Harriet Moreton, and she accordingly said—"I wonder that a daughter of Lord Alton's should understand ceremony so little, for he is reckoned the best-bred man of the day. She seems quite a woman



of the world, too. Well, I suppose etiquette is changed since the days of Queen Charlotte. I am sorry, though, they don't wear hoops now."

This consolatory reflection on the changes of fashion somewhat reconciled Lady Ellesmere to the want of form with which she had been met by Lady Harriet; and as her inspiration was always gathered from her husband's eye, she soon found, by the Earl's manner, that he was pleased with his new acquaintance, and of course the Countess was prepared to be so likewise.

Nothing was more uniform than the mode of living at Ellesmere Park. In summer, the low phaeton regularly came to the door, to receive the Earl and Countess for their evening drive. The fat coachman and sleek ponies had, for some dozen years, never been six minutes behind the appointed time; and the butler, with his liveried satellites, calculated to half a second when my Lord, and my Lady, and the massive coffee-pot, and the long-waisted tea-

urn, were to make their entrance together into the drawing-room. For to taste coffee in the dining-room, or, still worse, on the dinner-cloth, would have been considered as little less than sacrilege by the majority of the family.

This monotony of life little suited the habits of Lord Calvert, or the taste of Fitzosborne, though its very singularity rendered it at first not an unpleasant variety to either. This evening in particular, the vivacity of Lady Louisa became infectious; and though the young ladies and their attendant beaux took the same walk, and returned by the same portal which they had passed every day since Lionel's arrival, even *he* found amusement in the exhilarating tones and vivacious laugh of the gay and youthful Louisa.

At first, an unusual feeling of reserve seemed to influence Lord Calvert's manner towards Fitzosborne. Lionel, with his usual aptitude, perceived the change almost before his friend was conscious of the sentiment from which it arose. But it was not his present purpose to

receive Lord Calvert's confidence, even had it been offered to him. His own feelings had within the last few hours undergone a similar alteration, and he wanted time to analyse them, and to form his future plans. But his meditations were never more connectedly pursued than when apparently he was devoted to the occurrences of the passing moment ; then, like the power that

Rides in the whirlwind, and directs the storm,

he, with a master's hand, could equally excite and guide the passions of others ; extracting from their involuntary development unerring calculations as to the most effectual means of gratifying his own.

Probably few young men have arrived at the age of five-and-twenty without having viewed in fancy's eye some visionary form of perfection, to which in youthful devotion they have offered the incense of an unsophisticated heart. The cold realities of life seldom verify this dream of love. But though the fairy mists may

disperse with opening day, their evanescent brightness long leaves a track of light upon the memory; and should we in after years catch but a passing reflection of its beam, we again worship the regretted image, even in its semblance.

Fitzosborne's mind was not one to which such blissful visions were unknown. It is true that the *ignis fatuus* of his smile often gleamed like a death-fire when all was cold within. But time had been when the warm and genuine feelings of humanity played with lambent glories round his heart, and shed their genial influence on his character. At eighteen, he was generous, romantic, imaginative, and enterprising; full of conscious talent, and of all the aspiring hopes that conscious talent brings. At that age, with strong passions, unbounded ambition, but unsteady principles; with worldly honours as his prize, eternal happiness his stake, he was placed within the sphere—nay, almost under the tuition of Lord Alton's daughter; and this, his first step in life, was decided upon by his

father, upon the profoundest calculations of political expediency.

When Fitzosborne was first introduced to Lady Harriet, she was the wife of General Warder, and in all the zenith of her beauty and her splendour. Notwithstanding her being five years older than Lionel, she was unquestionably the most fascinating woman he had ever seen; and the universal homage which he witnessed as paid to her charms served only to confirm his own admiration of them. The consequences might easily have been foreseen. He soon loved her with a fervour which is never felt but once. His attachment partook of the natural qualities of his mind, and was compounded of enthusiasm and romance: so much so, that he would willingly have sacrificed the gratification of his own passion rather than have resigned one thought of her ideal perfection.

At first, the *naïveté* of his attachment amused her; it then gratified, and lastly, tired her. But in every stage its remedy was in her own

power; for in ceasing to respect the object of his love, the idol was dethroned, and his adoration at an end for ever.

Yet Lady Harriet's influence gave an indelible impress to Lionel's character. Under the specious names of friend and counsellor, she long guided every thought and instigated every action. The world, with all its follies and all its vices, all its dangers and its lures, was ably but prematurely unfolded to his view. He too soon learned, like those with whom he associated, to sneer at inexperience and to disbelieve in innocence. Man seemed but a prey for man; and those very energies that might have proved a blessing, to him as well as others, turned inward like inverted flames, and burned but for himself alone.

But in thus learning to discredit the existence of all virtue, he yet regretted the *beau idéal* of his youthful imagination; and sometimes almost wished to be the inhabitant of some other sphere, where that merit might really find existence, which in this world he con-

sidered as chimerical. Sometimes, too, in his solitary reveries, he would still picture to his mind a fairy form, bright in beauty as in innocence: but the vision ever came to him in the semblance of Lady Harriet, as he had first beheld her. It spoke to him in her thrilling voice; it looked on him with her dazzling eyes; it seemed to glide past him, encircled with all her graces and all her charms. But when this dear, this brilliant vision pressed too closely on his heart, he would thrill with all the recollections it recalled, and with the almost sickening conviction that it brought of woman's power and woman's worthlessness.

Such was his creed—such his sentiments; and often in his travels with Lord Calvert, when a casual allusion to home and England led to the mention of Julia Fielding's name, he had listened with the smile of incredulity, or sneer of contempt, to his praises of a virtue which Lionel disbelieved, and of a beauty to which he was more than indifferent.

The same Julia Fielding he found the fre-

quent theme at Ellesmere Park ; he heard of her talents till the subject almost wearied him ; and the first feeling except that of annoyance which her name excited, was of pleased surprise at learning that this same “cynosure of neighbouring eyes,” was niece to the very man he had been taught to look up to as the polar star of England.

This at once afforded him a solution to the mystery which had astonished him. He had been aware, almost from the moment of his arrival at Ellesmere Park, that Miss Fielding was Lord Calvert’s destined bride ; at least, that such was the wish of all his family. That the Earl’s pride should condescend to seek alliance with Mr. Fielding’s daughter, merely for the sake of her merit, or her talents, or her beauty, was, he considered, almost incredible. But Lord Alton’s niece, the daughter of his heir presumptive, was an object worthy the attention of any family ; and Fitzosborne, having duly weighed the political advantages of this new clue to his Lordship’s interest,



tacitly assented to his friend's marriage to one who united the actual good of family and fortune, to the insubstantial advantages of beauty and accomplishments.

But when Lord Ellesmere, in his admiration of Lady Harriet Moreton, first remarked her resemblance to her cousin, the name of Julia Fielding broke on the astonished ear of Lionel, as if the cabalistic word, which cast a spell upon his existence, had that moment been pronounced. His impatience to behold one, whom now he fancied he had seen in his morning dreams or midnight vigils, could scarcely be repressed; and when Julia herself stood before him, radiant in beauty and in innocence—when her dark eyes turned on him with a beam that lightened up shades of hours gone by—when the rosy smile he had loved to watch, again played round a mouth which a cherub might have owned,—a complicated feeling, between joy and sorrow, hope and fear, weighed upon his heart; and he almost wished to doubt again of woman's purity.

It was not, then, without design that Fitzosborne was himself the person who in their evening walk first turned the conversation on the now untiring strain of Julia Fielding's merits. To any mind but his, the honest warmth with which Lord Calvert's sisters talked of their young friend, would have seemed the result of genuine friendship; but on his principles, no such feeling could exist; and whilst he considered their praises but as artifices calculated to lead their brother to a measure they for selfish reasons wished, he contrived to elicit from them whatever information was most necessary for his own satisfaction.

In such conversation, the evening passed with unusual gaiety. Even the tedious ceremony of tea and coffee was concluded, without Fitzosborne feeling his wonted inclination to yawn. Nay more, so little narcotic was the dose, that he even lay awake some hours, considering, as calmly as he would have calculated the value of Colombian bonds, first, whether it would be at all worth his while to marry; and if it was,

which would be the best plan—to marry his friend's sister, or his destined bride ; and so perfectly was he master of his thoughts, that in these cogitations he omitted no probable contingency in favour of either of the ladies : amongst which, the possible death of his dear friend himself was by no means forgotten.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## A MORNING VISIT.

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Stella and Flavia every hour  
Unnumber'd hearts surprise ;  
In Stella's soul lies all her power,  
And Flavia's in her eyes.

MRS. PILKINGTON.

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THE time was past, if ever such had been, when Lionel Fitzosborne could feel or fancy he was in love at first sight ; and he now particularly gloried on what he flattered himself was the coolness with which, for some successive days, he weighed the respective merits of those whom he termed the rival candidates for the honour of his hand. But, meanwhile, he was

little conscious of the impression which Julia Fielding had made already on his fancy. Her image haunted him in his sleep ; and her name was the first word he was conscious of pronouncing as he awoke. But, on the morning when he expected again to meet her, after he had spent an unusual time in arranging his well-disciplined mustachios, and in sedulously parting his hair from the furthest point of his head to his forehead, he suddenly perceived that his too faithful mirror reflected the smile of contempt into which his features involuntarily relaxed, when he first became sensible of the wandering of his thoughts ; and he burst into a fit of laughing at himself, when he recollected that they had diverged from the right road of political calculation, even so far as to the silken eye-lashes of Julia Fielding.

If any person had prophesied to Lionel that he should ever condescend again to bestow a passing recollection on the beauty or merit of any woman, independent of other contingent recommendations, he probably would have con-

tradicted them in as positive a manner as his imperturbable politeness could have permitted. Yet this had now unexpectedly occurred ; and, what was still more provoking, the more he thought of this extraordinary circumstance, the more minute and indelible became his reminiscences of all that Julia had said, or done, or looked, during the few moments he had already passed in her company.

But whatever might have been the vacillation of his thoughts, his calm, mild, impressive manner was the same as usual when he entered the breakfast-room. Lady Louisa was trying on a new hat, and really looked beautiful, as, blushing at her own *naïveté*, she gaily turned round to ask his opinion of what to her seemed an *outrée* fashion.—Lord Calvert was carefully turning over the leaves of a grand-jury book, and humming one of the airs in *Il Crociato*, which Lionel remembered to have seen in Mr. Fielding's library ; and Lady Matilda stood at the open window, as if in majesty serene, seemingly engrossed by her own reflections.

Of all the individuals with whom Lionel Fitzosborne had ever associated, Lady Matilda Calvert was, perhaps, the one for whom his various merits had least attraction. Acute as was his faculty for discriminating character, he had not yet satisfactorily ascertained whether her apparent indifference to him arose from habitual coldness, or mere womanly affectation. Sometimes he imagined it proceeded from pride; and once he fancied he perceived a degree of scrutiny in her glance, to which he was unused. The first motives were the only ones he would have forgiven; and though it is more than probable that had they met any where but in the retirement of Ellesmere, her coldness would have escaped his notice; yet there it more than once attracted his attention, and never had it previously been so apparent to him as now, when her almost haughty manners were contrasted with the gay cordiality both of Lady Louisa and Lord Calvert.

Before Lionel had time to reply to Lady Louisa's artless challenge for admiration of her

hat, Lord Calvert started up, and taking hold of his coat-button, exclaimed, in a tone of raillery, "Remember, Mr. Fitzosborne, I don't act the part of special messenger to-day; I hereby, and in due form, enter my protest against that honourable distinction."

" 'Thou canst not say I did it,' Calvert, if you allude to the message you conveyed to the rectory the other day; and even if I did contribute to your return thither, I am sure the end would sanctify the means."

"Lady Harriet Moreton, I acknowledge, is irresistible," said Lord Calvert, colouring; "but, at least, let me have the merit of offering my own services."

"Well, the only punishment I ask is, that in return you should send me as often as you please, in your place, to Miss Fielding: remember, I 'hereby,' as you say, accept that penance."

"It is very different going voluntarily to being *sent* any where."

"There you are right, Calvert; but never-



theless, if you *are* to receive orders, it is lucky they are so easily obeyed." Fitzosborne said this with peculiar emphasis, but almost in a whisper. Lady Louisa heard it not; and as Lord Calvert turned abruptly away, she continued the conversation.

"You never told me, Mr. Fitzosborne, in all our conversations about my dearest Julia, what *you* thought of her; is she not beautiful?"

"Very;" and Mr. Fitzosborne took up the newspaper.

"Literal and concise," returned Lady Louisa: "I shall certainly tell her how *very* much you admire her."

"I fear, Louisa, that Miss Fielding is too much used to admiration, and too indifferent to it, to be much affected even by praise such as Mr. Fitzosborne's." As Lady Matilda said this, Lionel noticed that same indescribable expression, between dignity and doubt, which had before attracted his observation; but he replied to Lady Louisa with his usual benignant smile.

“ You know, my dear Lady Louisa, I only saw her for a moment the other morning ; I forget whether her eyes are brown or blue ; however, I will be more attentive to-day. But, pardon me, your *capote* is a shade too far forward : Lady Ellesmere, am I not right ? ”

Lady Louisa, with one toss of her head, threw her bonnet back, till, gipsy fashion, it fell on her shoulders ; and then, with a serio-comic air, inquired “ if that was *le suprême bon ton* ? ” Just then, Lord Ellesmere’s entrance suspended the discussion, and the substantial breakfast commenced.

No *puits d’amour*—no *confitures à la vanille*—no *pâtés aux truffes*—gave excuse for matin epicureanism. The toast, and its wiry toast-rack—the muffins—the cold French rolls—the scalding-hot chocolate—the Moka coffee—the gunpowder tea—all were presented to the assembled party in equal perfection and similar order, to that which had covered the identical narrow table fifty years ago : nor, with the exception of alternâte baskets of fruit, or piles of

buttered toast, as summer or winter prescribed, would much alteration be expected for fifty years to come.

However, the breakfast, such as it was, was finished at last, although some of the party thought it almost interminable ; and now, with various feelings, they all prepared for their expedition to Broomhill Barracks. As the carriages drove round the broad gravel in front of the countless steps at the hall-door, the calculations began respecting the disposition of their inmates.

“ Does your Lordship intend to go round by the rectory ? ” inquired Fitzosborne, with the most provoking quietude of manner.

“ Oh ! Calvert, that is quite unnecessary ; I have promised to call for Julia, and to bring her home with me,” hastily rejoined Lady Ellesmere, with due attention to decorum.

“ I had never the least intention of going so far out of my way,” replied Lord Calvert, coolly ; and, taking Louisa by the hand, they both got into his curricie, and drove off.

Lionel looked as if he was entirely at Lady Ellesmere's command : he was too polite to take possession of his dennet alone, and too proud to give Lady Matilda the opportunity of refusing a seat in it ; whilst Lady Ellesmere was equally, too, punctilious to suppose such a possibility as her daughter's going with Mr. Fitzosborne ; bidding him, therefore, a gracious farewell, till they met at the barracks, she, accompanied by Lady Matilda in the barouche and the Earl on horseback, drove round by Mr. Fielding's, leaving Lionel to follow Lord Calvert alone, and to laugh at her Ladyship's prudery.

Gay as Lady Louisa had been in the morning, her spirits rose almost to exuberance as she approached the scene of pleasure ; and when, as they slowly wound round the hill, on the top of which the barracks were situated, the sounds of martial music reached her ear at intervals, she could scarcely repress her almost infantine delight ; whilst her brother, pleased to see his beloved sister so happy, soon caught the reflection of her gaiety, although he almost wondered

at, and almost envied, her facility of enjoyment.

But Lady Louisa was scarcely sixteen, and more inexperienced in what are inaptly called the gaieties of the world than even her age bespoke. She never yet had known a sorrow or caused a grief; innocent and unambitious, her mind was endued with that aptitude of happiness which is in itself a blessing; and while she looked round the narrow circle of her acquaintance, she believed all her associates to be kind, and all her dependants happy.

Such is often the prospect of youth, as, cradled in the rainbow of hope, it sees the whole horizon of life through a golden prism. Those rays are one by one dispersed. But what can compensate for the loss of those fading hues, which alone throw celestial radiance on our path, and join this earth to heaven?

Quick beat her fluttering heart, as, jumping from her brother's curricie, almost before either he or Lionel were at hand to help her, Louisa Calvert found herself in that square of Broom-

hill barracks that is especially designated “ the Parade.” The day was brilliant without being oppressive, and she beheld all the splendour of martial revelry displayed to her delighted view ; nor did she, in the first moment of her enthusiasm, decide whether the uniform of the band or that of their officers was most beautiful.

The Countess had not calculated on the possibility of Lord Calvert’s entering the barrack gate without her being at hand to *chaperon* her daughter, or assuredly she would not have entrusted her to his care. But neither he nor the volatile Louisa had once recollected her sage admonitions on the subject ; and as Fitzosborne only ridiculed them, he rather accelerated than delayed their entrance to Lady Harriet’s apartments. But what an unexpected scene there awaited them !

Lady Harriet had invited all the ladies of the neighbourhood, who had previously visited her, which, as soon as this party was known, nearly included the whole number of residents : even Miss Hackerley had recollected the pas-

tor's last sermon on redeeming time, and now stood foremost in the throng assiduously complaisant. But amongst the earliest of those who had obeyed her Ladyship's summons, were Lady Weldon and her daughters, who had even arrived some half hour before they were expected.

These young ladies were zealously practising, under Lady Harriet's auspices, the new amusement of *tableaux vivans*, of which they had then first heard. The scene they had chosen to represent was from their younger sister's prints of the History of England, (for they were too prudent to venture far into the fields of literature,) and Queen Eleanor extracting the poison from her husband's arm was the novel subject they had selected.

Major Crosbie, as Edward the Third, was placed, like another usurper, on a tottering throne, which he affected to despise, at the same time looking pompous with all his might. Miss Weldon having thrown aside her bonnet, *à la capricieuse*, looked somewhat classical by

the judicious draping of her shawl, which fell in good folds as she knelt, not unwilling, at the Major's feet, and affected to raise his arm to her lips. Anna Weldon acted lady in waiting in the back-ground; and a young officer, as page, held a dragoon's helmet, which not inaptly represented that of the supposed monarch.

On the whole, the grouping was not ill imagined. But the fair sisters were too much used to look round for admiration to be able to keep their immutability many seconds. From the force of habit, they began first to cast their eyes slowly around them; they then looked interesting at every gaping cornet that met their view, and lastly, a smile of winning languishment succeeded. In vain Lady Weldon, observing the entrance of Lord Calvert and Fitzosborne, endeavoured to recall the waning admiration of the spectators, as, raising a spy-glass and massive chain, she repeated bravos innumerable. The contrast between the smirking misses and the imperturbable Major was irresistibly ludicrous; and though Lady Harriet



cared little for any ridicule that might fall upon her guests, she knew exactly the point at which the derision might extend to her party, and at that point, therefore, after one arch glance, that spoke volumes to Fitzosborne, she put a timely end to the caricature, by advancing to receive her newly arrived visitors.

Lord Calvert paid her Ladyship some compliment on the arrangement of the scene, to which she carelessly replied ; then, turning to Lionel with a bewitching smile, she continued, “ Tell me, Fitz, what have you been doing? I have expected you here these last two days. I have a long message for you from my father ;” then, deliberately passing her arm through his, they walked towards a distant part of the room.

“ I did not know Fitzosborne was acquainted with Lord Alton,” thought Lord Calvert ; but though he recollected the letter of introduction he had procured for his friend from Mr. Fielding, he scarcely considered the subject worth further observation.

Meantime, the indefatigable Lady Weldon, totally forgetting the delicacy of her constitution, bustled up to Lord Calvert, and endeavoured to extract some praises for her daughters, after due compliments on his return.

“And I sincerely wish *you* joy, my dear Lady Louisa,” added she, with a significant squeeze of the hand.

“Indeed it has made us all very happy,” replied the innocent girl, who thought only of her brother’s arrival, whilst Lady Weldon alluded to Mr. Fitzosborne.

“So, then, it is all settled; they have been in a wonderful hurry, considering she is so young. He is certainly handsome; but I dare say he is not so rich as I’ve heard. I wonder how much he gets down with her.”

Such were the mental reflections of the experienced matron: meanwhile her two daughters seized both Lady Louisa’s hands, and inundated her with questions.

“Didn’t that little Jew, as Lady Harriet calls it, go off admirably? What did your bro-

ther think of us? What were the people saying near you? Didn't you think Captain Brisbane looked very particularly at Anna? I must insist on his criticising me, though;" and with this diffident resolution the young lady turned away in pursuit of her intended victim.

Lord and Lady Ellesmere now entered the room, accompanied by Lady Matilda, and Mr. and Miss Fielding, and in a moment Lady Harriet was at their side. A somewhat hectic flush tinged her cheeks as she turned from Fitzosborne, and her eyes, always dazzling, now seemed almost to flash fire. But their expression waned as she turned to her guests, and her address to each was what each felt to be most fascinating. To Lady Ellesmere, whose family pride was portrayed even in her upright carriage, the Earl of Alton's daughter was at once modest and dignified, as if she felt herself honoured by the visit of the aristocratic Countess, precisely in the same degree as she could do honour in return. Lady Matilda and Lord Ellesmere received the unassuming

courtesy of one frankly solicitous to obtain their regard. But in her greeting to Mr. Fielding and Julia, a softness, beyond the mere finish of politeness, stole their reluctant suffrage. The halo of feeling clouded for an instant the illumination of beauty; a tear dimmed the eye that looked still lovelier in the liquid lustre; and as she offered both her hands to her uncle and his daughter, the half-parted lips seemed less to give a welcome than to ask a blessing. The appeal was as instantaneous as it was irresistible; and, in the same mute but intelligible language, Mr. Fielding's warm pressure of the flexible little hand ratified the compact of regard, and Julia's radiant countenance reflected back a smile as bewitching, but less timid than her own.

Yet all this had passed before Lady Weldon, who had now re-assumed the drawl interesting, had reached the middle of the room on her way to offer her languishing compliments to Lady Ellesmere; nor was there one person in the room, unless Fitzosborne were he, who could

have traced these various shades of feeling beyond the one which was singly presented to the individual to whom it was especially addressed.

Lady Harriet's manners exhibited the highest possible specimen of elegance; like the polished pebble, which, however beautiful in the exterior, is usually opaque as well as cold; and perhaps in both, it requires the perfection of art to give even an appearance of warmth or transparency.

But in the motley group that now surrounded Lady Harriet, there was one mind congenial to her own; for from her, Fitzosborne had learned some of those lessons in which he was now almost her superior. Beneath his eye, even hers might quail, and not a meteor ray could glance across the heaven of her brow that did not open to his view the storm in which it rose.

Scarcely had Julia touched the extremest verge of that circle whose magic power she was destined so soon to prove, when that innate

consciousness which belongs to incipient love told Lionel she was near : and following Lady Harriet with his eyes, he watched with the most eager interest her first introduction to her uncle and Miss Fielding. There, as they stood together, he compared the cousins' beauty—tracing a resemblance in every charm, whilst he contrasted the different expression of their countenances with a feeling painful, from its own intensity. But no change of feature betrayed even his attention to the passing scene, and he smiled and talked with unconstrained politeness, and seemed

Not e'en the shadow of the thing he was.

Meantime, Sir Henry Moreton had shown a tact scarcely less perfect, though of different character. Whatever were Lady Ellesmere's prejudices, her follies, if such they were, lay broadly displayed on the very surface of her figure. The virtues of her heart and the qualities of her mind lay deeper ; the first were carelessly exposed to the world's gaze, the last

were cherished for her friends alone. And after all, it is only with folly that the world has to do ; such a world, at least, as Sir Henry Moreton lived for. It was, therefore, by no means difficult to him to win the favour of the stately Countess, by merely paying her the respect she courted ; and having informed her that the band only waited her orders, she graciously accepted his offered arm to lead the way to the terrace, where the promenade commenced.

And now, as all were actors, all were pleased. Lady Louisa had, on the moment of her mother's entrance, sprung forward to join Julia and her sister ; and Lord Calvert certainly had not availed himself of that favourable opportunity to disengage himself from her arm. Not that he appeared peculiarly solicitous to enter into conversation with Miss Fielding ; as, on the contrary, he only gazed on her in silence during Lady Harriet's introduction. But her Ladyship had scarcely turned away when he whispered closely in her ear, " Julia, you have forgotten your bouquet—take

mine ; but stop—I cannot part with this.” So saying, he separated the bunch of lily of the valley from the rest, and carefully replaced it in the button-hole of his coat. Julia took the rose he offered her with a blush that rivalled it in hue ; and if she smiled, it was concealed by the flower whose perfume she was inhaling.

“ Is that an emblem of silence ? ” thought Lionel, as he approached the party at the moment Lady Ellesmere had begun her stately march. But his attention seemed wholly engrossed by Lady Matilda, to whom he offered himself as cavalier ; and Lord Calvert, as a matter of course, took Julia’s arm under his, and followed the *cortége*.

Which of “ all the officers ” would have had the gallantry to escort Lady Louisa must now ever remain doubtful ; for, before any of the gallant knights had made up their minds to the enterprise, the two Misses Weldon linked themselves under either arm. The eldest had seen with mixed pain and pleasure that Major Crosbie had selected Lady Weldon as a fit subject



for his taciturn courtesies; and Anna, who, while she talked and laughed with any person who would listen to her, had taken the opportunity of narrowly watching all Captain Brisbane's motions, saw with unmitigated regret, that he, with the utmost *sang-froid*, merely stepped back as many inches as allowed room for the French hats to pass by him. Nor did she flatter herself with the most distant hope that even her papa's old wines would induce any other of His Majesty's 60th regiment of dragoons to take compassion on her.

Lady Louisa, therefore, was her only resource; for as she stood in no particular need of either assistance or advice from her "dear Julia," she never thought of her, even had she been disengaged; and consequently, with infinite zeal, she now appended herself to her equally "dear Lady Louisa," who happened to be the person of highest rank within her reach.

It has been acknowledged, time out of mind, that nothing is more delightful than a good

military band. It is at once soothing and exhilarating ; and whether it is heard in the field of battle or the ball-room, whether its mingled tones swell in the soldier's triumph or moan in his funeral, it possesses a power over the feelings that the finest orchestra scarcely commands. Lady Harriet Moreton, therefore, judged wisely in deeming that the enjoyment of such a band as that regiment boasted, would be a kind of attraction which the prudery of few ladies in that neighbourhood could resist. Her party, therefore, was crowded even beyond her own calculations, and infinitely exceeded those of Miss Hackerley, who, panting with eagerness to enjoy all that was going forward, now came on the parade, vigorously drawing after her the complacent Mr. Warburton, who, though by no means vain of his *dame de compagnie*, was much too polite to remonstrate, and contented himself with looking unutterable things.

The Ellesmere party was the object to which Miss Hackerley directed her steeple chase; and

stumbling, elbowing, and apologizing, she at last arrived within hearing of them; when, scarcely waiting for a pause, either in the music or their conversation, she began an endless string of exclamations. "The day was so charming—and the band so exquisite—and Lady Harriet so agreeable—and, Miss Fielding, you look so delightful," continued she, addressing Julia as a last resource, finding no other person at leisure to listen to her.

"That is just what I would have said, if I dared," whispered Lord Calvert.

"And, my Lord, you made such a terrible long journey since I last saw you at Ellesmere," resumed Miss Hackerley, in her most considerate tone.

"*Mais oui!* Every person is obliged to travel now: it is epidemic. Do you remember any thing of Italy, Julia?"

"Yes, I recollect some of its beautiful scenery, and that I was delighted with its music."

"And what did *you* find most delightful in

Italy, my Lord?" inquired the persevering Miss Hackerley.

"The hope of return"—and something closely resembling a sigh accompanied this observation; but Lord Calvert was but little addicted to sighing, and turning gaily to Julia, he added—"For as to music, I think that last overture was played better than I have heard it done at San Carlos; and as to scenery, what could surpass this view?"—and as he said this, he pointed to the rectory.

The terrace on which they stood, commanded an extensive prospect on every side. In front, a long reach of the river was visible as it pursued its fretful way down a narrow glen at the foot of Mr. Fielding's woods, bubbling and frothing over many a stone,—whilst below Fairton bridge, broad, smooth, and expansive, it rolled slowly on towards Ellesmere. On the other side of the hill, a wild heathy common stretched on the eye, till it gradually blended in the haze of distance with corn-fields, and pastures, and hedge-rows, and hamlets innume-

rable ; and, still farther off, a single ray of light caught the slender spire of a church that glittered in the eye of heaven from amidst

yon town,

The western sun's now shining on.

“ This is assuredly a beautiful scene,” exclaimed Julia, her countenance beaming with heartfelt happiness.

“ You don't compare it with Martigny ?” whispered Fitzosborne, but in so low a voice as to be heard by none but Lord Calvert.

“ I should infinitely prefer this, if I had my choice,” replied the latter rather sternly.

“ If you had your choice ! ay, but ‘ not on compulsion, Hal—not on compulsion, ’ ”—and as Fitzosborne said this, a sardonic smile of contempt played round his lip, whilst fire itself seemed to gleam in his eye.

Lord Calvert started—nay, he almost shuddered. He tried to laugh as he found no ready answer, and in a few seconds he walked to the other side of the parade, under the pretence of speaking to Mr. Jessop.

Lady Matilda was still leaning on Lionel's arm ; but as soon as Lord Calvert quitted Julia's side, he offered the one that was disengaged to her, saying something of being allowed to replace her truant cavalier. " He loves but rides away"—added he, looking steadily in Miss Fielding's face. Julia coloured, and, angry at herself for doing so, she blushed still more.

" Has Calvert had time to tell you any of his adventures, Lady Matilda ?" inquired Fitzosborne, in a louder key than he had yet spoken. She replied in the negative, and he continued in a tone of raillery—

" Oh ! do ask him about his pretty little *inamorata* La Contessa Montalvina. But don't tell him I bid you do so, or he will never forgive me."

" You know travellers at home are seldom listened to, and still seldomer believed ; so I suppose my brother does not mean to publish his adventures till he gets at least as far from us as Persia, or the north pole.

" But do, pray, Mr. Fitzosborne, tell me about this Contessa," interrupted Lady Louisa laugh-

ing ; “ I want sadly to plague him a little, for he has been quizzing me so much about Mr. Jessop’s black eyes.”

“ *Bellissima Contessima mia*,” replied Lionel gaily, “ I have nothing to tell, but that La Montalvina was a most captivating Italian lady, and desperately smitten with Lord Calvert.”

“ And he ?”—eagerly inquired Lady Louisa.

“ *Cela va sans dire*.—Miss Fielding, do listen to that little boy who has just taken up the octave flute. He plays divinely, and I know you are a perfect judge of music.”

Julia affected to follow his advice, and secretly thanked him for the opportune diversion of attention. But her thoughts were by no means under control. She wondered whether it was Lord Calvert who told Mr. Fitzosborne she was a good judge of music ; then she wondered whether the Contessa Montalvina was musical ; and then so many “ wonders” succeeded each other in her mind, that she only knew the exquisite flute-playing was at an end, by being summoned to follow Lady Ellesmere into the

banqueting, *quasi* mess-room, where Sir Henry Moreton's *savoir vivre* was displayed even to the satisfaction of the fastidious Mr. Warburton.

In this movement, the ladies accidentally changed their escorts. Major Crosbie having been especially introduced to Lady Matilda, by Lord Ellesmere, with all the ceremony of Sir Charles Grandison's days, felt himself bound to be her conductor. Miss Weldon, almost forcibly monopolized Lord Calvert; Julia found herself left to the care of Mr. Fitzosborne; and Lady Louisa, nothing loth, accepted the guardianship of the black-eyed Mr. Jessop: and here the supremacy of military rank was strongly marked; for though Mr. Jessop was second son to one of the oldest earls in the peerage, he was content to give precedence to every untitled officer whose commission was superior to his own.

Lady Harriet Moreton had hitherto made but little display; and if any person had endeavoured to define exactly what made her manners so attractive as they were universally



acknowledged to be, they would have been puzzled to select any one quality peculiarly to praise.

Perhaps it was precisely that well-regulated but undefined harmony that gave such powerful effect to a variety of little nameless graces, which separately almost eluded observation, but conjointly produced a seductive refinement that was generally resistless. She possessed sufficient beauty, accomplishment, and talent, to excite admiration for each, if such had been her choice : but this day her object was to become popular in its literal sense ; and she well knew that to be so, it was more necessary to exhibit the beauty, accomplishment, and talent of others than to display her own.

The result was, that whilst the person she individually addressed, believed none was ever “ good, or fair, or wise as she,”—she obtruded not herself on the attention of any beyond those, who at the moment felt themselves flattered by her selection. Her own sex scarcely could accuse her of being a flirt, for she spoke almost

in whispers, and her manners were chiefly remarkable for their quiet unobtrusiveness; whilst the other sex seldomer discovered faults in one who, to use Lord Ellesmere's expression, was "certainly a charming woman."

Lady Weldon had taken infinite pains to analyse Lady Harriet's dress and deportment; for besides her being of unquestioned supremacy in fashion, she was likewise the latest arrival from town. The dimensions of her hat were accurately calculated, and she had privately taken down the name of Madame Oudaille, her Ladyship's dress-maker, without properly comprehending that she had not yet come to London. It even suggested itself once to her mind, that *l'air dégagé* was something newer than that of *la petite santé*, but her decision on this point was suspended when she heard Lady Harriet use the plea of a head-ach, in excuse for not accepting Lord Calvert as a partner in a quadrille, which, to the infinite delight of the youngest part of the company, succeeded to the *déjeûner*.

In the dance, Fitzosborne continued to be Julia's cavalier. They stood opposite to Lord Calvert and Miss Weldon ; and if the dancing of the two travellers were justly and equally to be admired, assuredly the contrast between the ladies was quite as remarkable.

“What a beautiful girl Miss Fielding is!”—ejaculated Mr. Jessop, as he led his partner Lady Louisa to a seat ; “pity she is not brought out in town.”

“*Cependant*, our country cousin has *l'air bien distingué*,” observed Sir Henry Moreton, who was standing a little behind Lady Louisa, and by no means wished to lose the opportunity of claiming relationship to Miss Fielding.

“I think her every thing that is delightful,” replied Lady Louisa with vivacity.

“Yet, believe me,” rejoined Lady Weldon in her usual suppressed voice, “if your Ladyship only knew what London girls are, you would see a great contrast between them and our poor dear Julia,—don't you agree with me, Mr. Jessop?”

“ Perfectly,”—replied the laconic Dragoon, with immutable gravity.

Before Lady Louisa could interfere in Julia’s vindication, she perceived that Lady Harriet Moreton had laid aside both her head-ach and her hat, and had commenced a waltz with Lord Calvert. Lady Ellesmere’s daughters had not even witnessed this dance before, and surely never could they have seen it to greater perfection; for Lord Calvert’s animation, contrasted with Lady Harriet’s quiet grace, extorted praise even from the astonished Countess.

But this favourable impression of waltzing, rather faded under the ponderous swings of the two Misses Weldon. Captain Brisbane, who, he scarcely knew how, had fallen to Anna’s share, was not duly solicitous to show off his partner to advantage. By some mismanagement, his arm, which, as all waltzers know, should have rested in the latitude of her artificial waist, listlessly fell down some degrees lower, and there the enormous white glove was seen to grasp, in muscular strength, all the

petticoats and *pelissons* that came within its reach, as if the apathetic beau required every extraneous support, to enable him to bear the unwonted fatigue. His sleepy eyes were seldom raised from the floor; and his immoveable countenance showed no responsive animation, although the indefatigable Anna smiled and twirled *à toute outrance*.

Sir Henry Moreton was more successful with her sister; he really danced well, and his portly figure was so effectual a counterpoise to that of Miss Weldon, that he actually contrived to keep time in his own movements, notwithstanding that his partner only hit the right step every third turn.

Fitzosborne, having previously gone through the ceremony of asking both the Ladies Calvert to take a turn, earnestly, but vainly, urged Julia to do the same. She had learned waltzing abroad; and as a child, had been peculiarly remarkable for her excellence in that dance. But she now positively refused to join in it;

alleging, what was nearly true, that she had never practised it since she had returned from the Continent. The name of Italy served Fitzosborne as an excuse to lead the conversation to all of music and of song which that name entails ; and so delightful was his voice, and so interesting his observations, that Julia was surprised, and sorry to be summoned by Lady Ellesmere to accompany her home.

As the Countess and her daughters were passing towards the door, notwithstanding Sir Henry Moreton's reiterated request that they should not go so soon, Fitzosborne, with Julia on his arm, passed close to where Lord Calvert was standing talking to Lady Harriet. Taking Julia cordially by the hand, she thanked her in the most affectionate manner for her visit ; and then turning to Lionel, invited him to stay longer, as the dancing had scarcely commenced. He excused himself, however, on the plea of escorting Lady Ellesmere : then turning to Lord Calvert, whispered, "and you, I suppose, are under orders too?"

“ Yes, to dance *Il Turco in Italia* with Lady Harriet.”

So saying, he coldly bowed to Julia. Fitz-osborne smiled ; and thus the two friends parted. Lionel accompanying the Earl and the ladies to Ellesmere Park ; and Lord Calvert taking his place in attendance on Lady Harriet.

## CHAPTER IX.

## LOVE THOUGHTS.

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Thou know'st how guiltless first I met thy flame,  
When love approach'd me under friendship's name ;  
My fancy form'd thee of angelic kind,  
Some emanation of th' all-beauteous mind ;  
Those smiling eyes, attempering every ray,  
Shone sweetly lambent with celestial day !  
Guiltless I gazed.—

POPE.

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IF Lionel Fitzosborne possessed one talent in greater perfection than another, it was that of probing the thoughts of those with whom he associated. It was now, however, his business to probe his own ; and deep were his medita-



tions, as, silent and alone, he mechanically followed the carriage which contained her, who, unconsciously to herself, had become the arbitress of his destiny.

The moon had risen with unusual splendour from behind the hill they had just quitted. The glimmering lights that were beginning to sparkle from the windows of Lady Harriet's rooms seemed lurid, in contrast to the silvery lustre that caught the tufted woods of Mr. Fielding's park, and spread in broad and tranquil brilliancy beneath the arches of Fairton Bridge; whilst the river, scarcely murmuring in its course, seemed pleased to bear the lovely image towards the shadowing bowers of Ellesmere Park. A fitful fancy suddenly seized on Lionel's imagination: he thought he saw, in the chastened beam, the unearthly spirit of her he loved passing onwards to other halls than his, whilst the red torches that now glowed more fiercely from the hill, seemed like watch-fires on some beacon-height, foretelling strife and woe.

“And be it so !” exclaimed he, almost aloud. “Her spirit may breathe through the halls of Ellesmere ; her image may wander through his proud demesnes : but alive, I will never see her Calvert’s bride.”

This very articulation of his thoughts served to confirm and arrange his plans ; and ere the carriages turned through the massive gates that gave entrance to the park, his countenance was as serene, and his mind as composed, as if the hours had passed—

In holiest meditation wrapt.

Meanwhile, for the first time in her life, Julia returned to Ellesmere with a feeling almost of melancholy. Her visits there had ever, hitherto, been made with unmixed sensations of pleasure, whilst all her recollections of sorrow were associated with other scenes.

Her mother, having spent several winters abroad, had died at Nice, of a consumption, when Julia was only seven years old ; and as Mr. Fielding’s affliction at her loss was too

deep to admit of his immediate return to that spot which formerly had witnessed almost uninterrupted happiness, he prolonged his stay on the Continent after her death, for nearly three years : during which time, his little Julia had learned almost intuitively many of those accomplishments that in England are purchased too often by the tears of infancy.

At the age of ten, in contradiction to all modern plans of education, Julia bade adieu to Italy, and retired to the secluded groves of Fairton, unpolluted by those scenes of brilliant dissipation into which many girls of that age are purposely initiated ; but, at the same time, she returned perfected in the accomplishments of music and foreign languages, for which such daily sacrifices are made of all that in the eye of reason seems most valuable.

Lady Ellesmere, with all the kindly feelings that peculiarly, nay exclusively, belong to the character of an English matron, received, on Mr. Fielding's return, the little motherless stranger with almost maternal affection ; and

though he would never comply with the urgent request of the Countess to resign his darling solely to her charge, yet she soon became identified with her own children. Miss Fielding's little muslin bed in the nursery at Ellesmere, was as often occupied as its prototype at the rectory ; and whilst she read aloud the Italian classics in what was to her the most accustomed language, her foreign idiom was in turn corrected by her little friends and playmates—the Ladies Calvert : and as both families grew up, Mr. Fielding took equal pains in the instruction of each in the more serious studies of English literature, whilst the same masters attended both in the other branches of female education.

Thus Italy, though by no means entirely effaced from Julia's memory, dwelt on it like the reflection of its own changeful sky : its brilliancy sometimes bursting in unclouded splendour, and sometimes darkened by the remembrance of her mother's death and her father's sorrow ; whilst Ellesmere always rose

to her mind with its magnificent woods and verdant pastures, as the cool retreat to which the traveller returns with gratitude, and where he is most sure to find a solace for every toil.

All this Fitzosborne knew. He knew, too, for deeply had he sounded the hearts of those whose happiness seemed fluttering in his grasp—he knew that the mutual preference between Julia and Lord Calvert, which in those early years of intimacy had merely assumed the frankness of fraternal affection, had manifestly increased, at least on his part, with their riper years. Whenever Lord Calvert had returned to Ellesmere in his Oxford vacations, he had found the companion of his childhood gradually improving in beauty, and in those elegant accomplishments in which her natural talents so eminently qualified her to excel: still, however, her extreme youth (as she was but fourteen when Lord Calvert went abroad) prevented any thing like a serious attachment having been formed between them. Yet,

nevertheless, the old Earl was too well aware of all the advantages possessed by Miss Fielding, not to be desirous to see him select for a wife a lovely girl whose character and dispositions had already endeared her to all his family, and whose connexions and wealth fully equalled even Lord Ellesmere's expectations for his son.

This, and much more, Fitzosborne already knew. But to the innocent and unassuming Julia, no such calculations had ever occurred. When she had first met Lord Calvert on the evening of her return from Weldon House, she believed and hoped that the simple friendship of their early years was to be again renewed ; and she rejoiced at his return, as freely and as frankly as she would have welcomed a beloved brother.

But when Lord Calvert returned day after day to the rectory, and at each recurring visit betrayed more and more his preference of her society, a faint consciousness fluttered at her heart, that the admiration he scarcely endea-

voured to conceal, exceeded the mere friendly partiality he had formerly professed.

Of her own feelings, she stopped not to inquire. But her "bosom's lord sat lightly on its throne;" and, full of hope which she blushed to feel, and hardly dared to cherish, she gladly accompanied Lady Ellesmere to Lady Harriet Moreton's, scarcely conscious that in all the crowd she went to meet, there was but one whose presence she desired.

Quick as the lightning which her glance resembled, she perceived, on entering Lady Harriet's room, that the faded flower, which many a day before she had given to Lord Calvert, still held its place in his bouquet; and long before he had reached the spot on which she stood, his impatient glance had been met and rewarded by a rosy smile.

Tacit as this communication was, it needed not interpretation; and with a joyous heart she had accepted his proffered arm, and calculated, almost unconsciously, on being his selected partner for the whole day. Con-

trary, however, to these unavowed expectations, she perceived that he had voluntarily abandoned her to Fitzosborne's care; and though she had felt, or fancied, that in whatever part of the room Lord Calvert stood, still his eager gaze pursued her, yet it had not escaped her notice that, after Fitzosborne joined them, Lord Calvert had scarcely spoken to her for the remainder of the evening.

Disappointment and chagrin, unwonted inmates of her guileless bosom, now weighed involuntarily on her spirits; and on the plea of fatigue, she retired early to her room, but not to sleep. In a thousand varied forms, she recalled to her mind all Lord Calvert's looks and words on that portentous day. She recollected that once, at the barracks, she had observed him watching her as she was talking to Fitzosborne, with an expression of gravity on his countenance far different from those looks of approbation which from him she always hitherto had been used to.

“ Have I been in any way inattentive to



him?" thought she, as she laid her head upon her pillow. "Perhaps I was too much engrossed by all the anecdotes that Mr. Fitzosborne told me of Italy and his travels. As he is Calvert's friend, I quite forgot he was such a stranger to me. Dear Calvert! if you knew my heart, I am sure you would find that my regard for you is exactly the same as either Matilda's or Louisa's."

With this consolatory and no doubt well-founded reflection, the artless Julia soon lulled herself to sleep. But what were the meditations of Fitzosborne?

It is said that in other climes the albatross is sometimes seen to wave its black pinions in the cloudless sky. The horizon is bright—the air is still. But no sooner does this dark bird of fate cross the wide canopy of heaven, than the fairest flowers fade, and hope itself is blighted. The spell is unknown, but its power is felt in the withering storm; and many a gallant vessel, as it

swam down the placid stream, has been wrecked on some hidden shoal, and owed its ruin (as is thought) to the strange, mysterious albatross.

## CHAPTER X.

## MACHINATION.

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How vainly, through infinite trouble and strife,  
The many their labours employ,  
Since all that is truly delightful in life,  
Is what all, if they please, may enjoy.

OLD SONG.

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THE slumbers of Julia Fielding were as refreshing and undisturbed as if her horoscope was unmarked by any lurking danger ; and, the next morning, Lady Louisa had stood for many minutes at her bedside ere she awoke ; a few more, however, sufficed for her toilet ; and

then, blithe as the summer breeze they courted, the two friends commenced their usual ramble.

The flower-gardens and aviary were of course first visited, and many were the thanks the old gray-headed gardener received for the care he had taken of Julia's parterre. "Bless her sweet face, I'd tend any thing that ever was her'n," ejaculated he as they turned from him down the long walk that led to the orangery—the square fish-ponds—the broad raised terraces—the labyrinth—the herbary—the orchard; all were quickly traversed; nor did either of the two friends surmise that Messrs. Brown, or Repton, or any of their fraternity, could ever improve scenes that were hallowed to their memory by many a day of happiness.

"Now, shall we go and see old Joan at the dairy-farm?" inquired Lady Louisa, to whose elastic spirits the fresh morning air gave renovated elasticity.

"*Con piacer*," replied Julia; and off they started, sometimes running lest they should be too late for breakfast, sometimes stopping to

pull the daisies and meadow-flowers, and not unfrequently humming the waltzes they had heard the day before, and accelerating their pace by odd measures danced in time to their own singing.

Scarcely had they reached the stile that separates the farm from the pleasure-ground, when they heard Lord Calvert's voice shouting loud and gaily after them ; he soon overtook them, though somewhat out of breath with his race, and, as soon as he could speak, he gave each a vigorous scolding for her childishness in walking so fast on such a hot morning, although his own pace by no means implied a doubt as to the wholesomeness of the exercise, and having linked their arms in his, he almost dragged them forward.

And now Julia was soon convinced that her supposition of having offended him was quite erroneous. If she had before felt, though scarcely acknowledged even to herself, that an indescribable change had taken place in Lord Calvert's manners towards her since his return

from abroad,—if she had regretted, that whilst to others he was still apparently the same gay, exhilarating companion, the same cordial, zealous friend he had ever been, his behaviour to her had evidently altered, vacillating occasionally between a greater and a less degree of cordiality than formerly, but never, as she conceived, resembling the confidential, kind, unpresuming intercourse that heretofore had subsisted between them,—if such reflections had contributed to her chagrin, the painful feeling was soon dispelled ; for on that morning his gay, happy laugh was the same as when they last had trodden that path together ; and she even felt still more assured of being as much a favourite as ever, when he reminded her, that “ nothing could be so old-fashioned as the large cottage bonnet she then had on, nor any thing so preposterous as her walking out even to the dairy-farm without having a Cachemire suspended on her arm.”

Old Joan was, as usual, delighted to receive them, and it is uncertain how long they would

have remained listening to her stories of "how my young Lord used to ride all the donkies, and how Miss Julia used to coax her for the little white calves," had not the breakfast-bell summoned them to the house. But it so happened (no doubt from the perversity of human nature), that though unquestionably there was now a much more reasonable excuse for haste, their return was effected at a much slower pace than that at which they had set out, and they found the whole party assembled in the breakfast-parlour when they entered.

Lord and Lady Ellesmere received the apologies of the truant party with a complacent smile, which would scarcely have been bestowed on any three other individuals who had so far broken through the prescribed rules of Ellesmere as to have been five seconds beyond any appointed hour.

Mr. Fitzosborne was apparently so intent on perusing his share of the contents of the post-bag, that he scarcely noticed their entrance. To his correspondence, succeeded the perusal of

the newspapers, by which he seemed not less engrossed, till Lord Calvert interrupted him by inquiring, whether he had met with any news?

“None in the Chronicle that is of public interest; but I see, Calvert, our friend the Countess Montalvina is arrived in London;” and he read aloud the following paragraph:—

“Yesterday the ——— ambassador arrived at the magnificent house in Portman Square which has been for some time in preparation for his Excellency, who is accompanied by his sister, the beautiful and accomplished Countess Montalvina.”

“Fitzosborne, as he laid down the paper, cast a sidelong glance at Lord Calvert, beneath which the latter almost quailed. The look was instantaneous, and the malignant smile which at the same time faintly curled the corners of Fitzosborne’s mouth as instantaneously subsided; for one—and only one had equally cast a scrutinizing glance on him. As Lionel was in the act of withdrawing his eyes from Lord Calvert, those of Lady Matilda unexpectedly



met his. Her calm, steadfast, penetrating gaze had an expression from which Lionel involuntarily shrunk. But no change of countenance betrayed his secret thoughts: his eyes met those of Lady Matilda as steadily as hers had rested upon him. The beautiful mouth again curled in a smile; but now it was one of ineffable benignity, and, with that voice of insinuating softness that few had yet been found able to withstand, he offered her Ladyship the newspaper, which she seemed to look for.

“Is there any news of a change in the ministry?” inquired the good old Earl, by whom all this had been unnoticed.

“Not in the papers,” replied Fitzosborne; “but I have received some letters that speak confidently of a change in the Cabinet. You, however, Mr. Fielding, should be the best authority on this point, for Lord Alton is spoken of as our new minister.”

“I am a bad politician,” replied the Rector; “but I doubt the probability of his taking office immediately; for here is a letter from him,

urging me to meet him at Alton Forest in a few days."

"And if you go, Mr. Fielding, won't you leave Julia with us?" eagerly rejoined Lady Louisa. Julia blushed as she turned towards her father, who smiled assent to the Countess's eager corroboration of her daughter's request. Lionel did not seem to notice this arrangement, and continued his interrogatories to Lord Calvert.

"Have you got any intelligence from Paris, Calvert? I thought I saw a foreign letter directed to you in a hand I knew. Is our ambassador there still?"

Lord Calvert coloured, and said something about his correspondence not relating to politics.

"But, my dear Lord," continued his persecuting friend, "you forget that you have carried your election, and are now a sworn politician."

"I am heartily glad, my dear sir," observed the Earl, with pomposity, "to perceive that

you agree with me in thinking politics should be considered as a subject of vital importance. I have no idea of any person accepting the responsibility of representing any of his fellow-subjects in Parliament without considering himself solemnly bound to guard their interests and promote their welfare."

"I believe, however," rejoined Mr. Fielding, laughing, "that some of our present members confine their ideas of duty to franking letters and giving election dinners."

"In my opinion," quietly added Lord Calvert, "politics, in its proper acceptation, is the only study worthy the attention of a man of sense."

"Ay, Oswald," returned the proud father, "there spoke the hereditary attachment of the Calverts to King, Lords, and Commons."

"And," good-humouredly continued Mr. Fielding, "so equally balanced is that old-fashioned attachment to all three, that I verily believe your Lordship would have been either a Hampden or an Albemarle if your

services had been required as those of either were."

Fitzosborne rather dreaded from experience a recurrence to old Magna Charta, and therefore hastily inquired whether Lord Calvert had made up his mind as to which party he would join.

"No party, Calvert, no party," hastily interrupted the Earl. "Never consider politics as a profession. Be independent in your principles as you are in your circumstances; but never condescend to be a party-man."

"You remind me," said Fitzosborne, laughing, "of the Irish petitioner, who sagely remarked, that whoever was a friend to all parties was the enemy of all."

"I believe, Fitzosborne," replied Lord Calvert, "that you and I agree, that party in public life resembles some private friendships—a mere compact between knaves and fools, begun in self-interest and continued in hypocrisy."

"I do quite agree with you, Calvert," returned Fitzosborne, with an air of proud and

noble enthusiasm. "And I honour that man, who, like Lord Ellesmere, acknowledges independence for his idol, and scorns to be led tamely even by his friends."

Here the conversation turned into a warm debate on politics; in which Lionel dexterously contrived to lead Lord Ellesmere into a full discussion equally of his own principles, and of his views for his son. And though his Lordship's estimate of the absolute duties which he asserted every member of Parliament was bound to fulfil towards his constituents, widely differed from that of the Tralee school; yet his Lordship's exhortations to his son, not to be an "idle and unprofitable member," sufficiently answered Fitzosborne's purpose, and apparently confirmed his own previous advice to Lord Calvert; whilst, at the same time, it afforded him abundant opportunity to descant on the virtue of independence. He seemed to coincide in all the Earl's expressed opinions, and endeavoured to impress upon Mr. Fielding's mind,

due notions of his own correct views and brilliant talents.

This conversation lasted much longer than suited Lord Calvert's taste; and towards its close, he remained silent and abstracted: at last, suddenly starting from his reverie, he sauntered into the library, where Lady Louisa and Miss Fielding were practising one of Meyer's most beautiful cavatinas.

But not even their linked sweetness could at first win him from that pensiveness, which was the more remarkable, as being uncongenial to his natural character. He stood leaning with his back to the high old-fashioned window in silent musing, till Lady Matilda, stealing up to him, affectionately laid her hand on his, and seeming to read his thoughts, whispered in a soothing tone, "Surely, Oswald, you never heard sweeter tones, even in Italy."

"In Italy, Matilda?—and why should the memory of Italy intrude on such a scene as this?" Then seeming to recall his thoughts, he

added, in a careless manner, "I think Louisa's voice is astonishingly improved."

"If she is, her improvement is solely owing to Julia. But, my dearest brother, forgive me, if I say I think you too are altered since we all last met here."

"Improved, I hope," said Lord Calvert; "though I am afraid under other instruction."

"No, Oswald; I do not think you are improved. When we were last here together, you were the gayest of the gay."

"Thank you, Matilda; thank you heartily for your compliment." He tried to smile, but the gay expression passed, as, taking her cordially by the hand, he added, in a mournful tone, "Thank God, Matilda, I can still believe *you*, at least, sincere."

"And if I am sincere, why not be equally so with me? Do not think me inquisitive, Oswald, but I sometimes almost fancy that you look unhappy."

"Matilda, I have had my grievances, as well as other men: but, indeed, dear girl, I am not

unhappy. No man can be, who, like me, feels his own independence, and stands at the starting-post of a glorious race."

His eyes sparkled as he said this, and renovated spirit seemed to brighten all his countenance.

"Yes, Calvert, you should be happy; for all that constitutes happiness, seems within your reach."

"But with some minds, Matilda, even happiness would lose its character, if no choice were left as to its means. I, for one, must carve my own destiny, or Paradise itself would satiate with sweets."

Just then, a beautiful cadence, sung by Miss Fielding, arrested their conversation; and the enthusiastic "bravo," which, after a moment's pause, burst from Lord Calvert's lips, seemed a faint testimonial of that delight which his eyes more animatedly confessed.

But the "bravo" was echoed by a voice more soft, and the delight was reflected by eyes still more impassioned. Fitzosborne had entered



the room unperceived, and now approached the piano-forte, to give utterance to the best-worded compliments, expressed in the most insinuating tone, and so well constructed, that neither of the ladies could object to her own share of praise.

Julia made no reply : but Lady Louisa kept up the ball of conversation, till it made many a rebound of flattery and gaiety ; and at last, perceiving that both Julia and Lady Matilda had quitted the room, she also recollected a task of work assigned to her by Lady Ellesmere, and left the two gentlemen alone.

“ Well, Fitzosborne, what do you think now of Miss Fielding—does not she sing delightfully ? ”

Lord Calvert said this with a flushing cheek and hurried voice ; but his eyes rested on the immoveable countenance of his companion, as if he fain would read his very soul.

“ She sings as well as almost any professor I ever heard ; her voice is something like Pizaroni’s,” calmly replied Lionel.

“ I told you she was a nice person,” returned Lord Calvert, with ill-assumed indifference.

“ She seems perfectly amiable ;” and Lionel looked steadily in his face as he spoke ; “ I never saw a more docile character than hers.”

“ Docile !—what do you mean ?”

“ Mean by docile ! You cannot misunderstand my words. I mean, that Miss Fielding seems to have no will of her own, but to be entirely under the guidance of her father and your family ; and of this, Calvert, I give you joy.”

“ Give me joy !—explain yourself, Fitzosborne.”

“ Come, Calvert, you are not acting frankly with me : you know I could not be here an hour without perceiving that there is a family compact for you to marry Miss Fielding ; and as it seems neither you nor she are left a choice, I am glad for your sake that she sings well, and for hers that she is of such a docile disposition.”

As Lionel said this, he approached Lord

Calvert, and continued the conversation in a cool determined manner, but at the same time in the suppressed tone of confidence.

“You are mistaken, Fitzosborne,” replied his companion, with some agitation: “I know of no compact such as you allude to; and in any case, I flatter myself that both Miss Fielding and I will choose for ourselves.”

“You may, Calvert; for I know the independence of your character: if *you* suffer yourself to be driven into matrimony, even though the whip were made with golden rods, I shall henceforward give up all my faith in man’s professions.”

“Trust me, I am not likely to be *so driven*. No! though Julia Fielding is one of the most beautiful girls I ever beheld, I would not even accept her for my wife, unless I felt convinced that the choice of both was free as air.”

“The choice of both! take my advice—satisfy yourself as to your own determination, leave hers to chance.”

“And why?—do you think there is any

chance of Julia preferring any other person?" Lord Calvert's cheek glowed, and his eyes beamed fire, as with the most intense interest they rested on Fitzosborne's colourless visage.

"Prefer any other person to your Lordship! no—that is impossible."

"Why do you think so, Lionel?" and in his eagerness, Lord Calvert scarcely breathed.

"Because she has no option." The words fell cold on Lord Calvert's heart. "Poor thing, I almost pity her;" continued Fitzosborne, after a moment's pause.

"You are certainly very flattering." And Lord Calvert's high-wrought feelings sheltered themselves under an unusual assumption of haughtiness.

"Calvert! if you are offended at my honesty, I have done. You asked me my opinion frankly, and frankly I have told it to you. If you choose voluntarily to tighten the noose that is suspended over your head, be it so; 'thou canst not say 'twas I that did it.'"

Lord Calvert shook his friend's hand with a

cordiality that might have melted any other heart, but his agitation prevented his speaking; and Lionel continued.

“ I said I pitied Miss Fielding, and so I do: not for being elected your bride, by the unanimous voice of both your family and hers; but simply because that choice was not spontaneously her own.”

“ And how do you know, Lionel, that I may not be her choice?” said Lord Calvert, hesitatingly.

“ The poor girl at present has no alternative, but either marrying your Lordship or quarrelling with all the friends of her childhood. You see such an understood thing is your marriage in the neighbourhood, that no other suitor approaches Miss Fielding: at least, my Lord, you may feel assured, that though she may not have a preference for you, you have no rival.”

“ And do you think, Fitzosborne, I could ever be satisfied by so cold, so heartless a return?”

“ But, my dear Calvert, you must submit

to your fate. If your family have decided on your marrying Miss Fielding, and if you have determined to be a good boy, and do as you are bid, you may think yourself luckier than most men, if your fair wife has even a negative preference for you."

"Never, Lionel! never would I marry any woman on those terms—still less Julia Fielding."

"And how can you satisfy yourself that she ever accepts you on any other?"

"By leaving her to the unbiassed decision of her own mind. If I thought she could decidedly and without constraint prefer me to all other men——"

"But that could never be ascertained till other men were presented to her choice; and that is impossible, as you and she are at present circumstanced."

"Lionel, you are my friend—the only confidant of my thoughts. Will *you* ascertain her actual feelings for me? I know I ask a favour."

“What! do you want *me* to make love to Julia Fielding?” and Lionel laughed, to hide his own emotion.

“No, Fitzosborne, not that exactly. I would not ask you to assume a part that would be as uncongenial to your disposition as to my own. But after what you have said—after you have pointed facts to my view, which I had never before observed——”

“And if the girl takes a fancy to *me*?”

“Then I shall thank you—doubly thank you, for having saved me from the horror of being her husband, and not her choice.”

At that moment, Lord Ellesmere and Mr. Fielding entered the room, and put an end to the conversation. Fitzosborne threw himself upon the couch, and calmly took up a book, in which his attention seemed soon entirely engrossed; whilst Lord Calvert, with almost unrepressed agitation, strolled out into the park, in the vain hope of calming his irritated feelings.

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE PEER AND HIS DAUGHTER.

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Some feelings are to mortals given,  
With less of earth in them than heaven ;  
And if there be a human tear  
From passion's dross refined and clear,  
'Tis that which pious fathers shed  
Upon a duteous daughter's head.

LADY OF THE LAKE.

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THE intelligence that Julia would remain at Ellesmere during her father's visit to Lord Alton was received with unmixed pleasure by the Earl and Countess, as well as by their daughters ; not so with poor Lord Calvert. Fitzosborne was present when Lady Louisa in the joy of her heart communicated to her bro-



ther, what she termed, the good news, and Lionel's only commentary was a smile of irony; such as it was, however, it had its due effect, and Lord Calvert, for the first time in his life, reflected almost with regret on Julia's protracted visit.

Again the bitter lessons he had learned in his travels shed their baneful influence on his soul. To his distempered mind even Julia herself, who was the very personification of purity, appeared but as another of those Italian sibyls, whose winning spells are wrought in the labyrinths of deceit; and whilst with a vanity almost pardonable, he attributed the prolongation of her stay at Ellesmere to his presence there, he rejected the supposititious compliments with a bitterness of feeling scarcely less painful to himself, than unjust to her who so unconsciously excited it.

On Lord Calvert's first going abroad, the image of Julia Fielding had been the *beau idéal* of his reveries: memory presented to his mind the embryo beauty, whose expansion he had so

delightedly watched, and imagination dressed its idol in transcendent loveliness ; whilst the overflowing partiality of both his sisters to the companion of their infancy cherished this incipient attachment by details of her superior merits, with which all their letters were filled.

A thousand little anecdotes of her charity and benevolence, occasional proofs of her excellence in all modern accomplishments, and artless messages of affectionate remembrance thus transmitted to Lord Calvert, served to confirm and justify his early preference ; and even when less refined pleasures courted his acceptance, and engaged his occasional pursuits, the figure of Julia, embellished with every grace that fancy could bestow, floated on his mind as a presiding angel of another sphere. He never listened to a strain of music of peculiar softness, that her flexible voice did not vibrate on his ear : he never saw a romantic landscape or a splendid spectacle, that he did not involuntarily anticipate Julia's remarks on it, or wish for her companionship in its enjoyment ;

and of the various little gifts which he from time to time transmitted to Ellesmere, those destined for her were always selected with the greatest solicitude.

Thus even on the shores of the Mediterranean he flattered himself he could still anticipate or direct her tastes ; and in the most crowded halls of foreign splendour, her beauty rose to his view, peerless in all the blushing loveliness of youth and innocence. But when the wily Contessa Montalvina succeeded in exciting a violent but transient passion in his heart, the purer image of Julia Fielding faded in the glare of her meretricious charms ; or if ever it arose to his imagination, it was in the form of one of the cold wreaths of snow beheld only in the regions of romance as hovering over distant and visionary scenes. From that date, his letters to home had been far less confidential, and his mention of Julia proportionably less frequent. So perceptible indeed was the alteration, at least to Lady Matilda, that, with a mixture of pride and delicacy, she had lately abstained from all

mention of Miss Fielding in her correspondence with her brother ; and Lady Louisa by degrees fell into the same habit, not from tact, but from the inconsiderateness which was habitual to her character.

Thus, when Lord Calvert had beheld Julia on his first visit to the rectory, her beauty broke on him with all the effect of novelty ; and although he persuaded himself that, at first, mere curiosity, and then a want of other occupation induced him to return thither daily, yet he soon found that the lovely artless Julia more than realised even the fairy dream of his earlier recollections. Still it was her artlessness more even than her beauty that had captivated him. In her society, if ever he thought of those who were once her rivals, he remembered them but with disgust, and his admiration was now most excited when called forth by qualities diametrically opposite to those which once held empire over him.

To trace then the faintest similarity between the character of La Contessa Montalvina

and that of Julia Fielding, was, to destroy his reverence for one, and doubly to renew his detestation of the other; and when the bitter smile of Lionel pointed out the flattery which owed its origin but to their own distorted minds, Lord Calvert shuddered as he anticipated the downfall of his hopes, and the chill of distrust again crept over the heart which had so lately expanded in the sun-shine of happiness.

Fitzosborne saw that the poison he had so dexterously infused already began to circulate in every vein; and while Julia and her father parted with tears—his of pure affection—hers of sad presentiment, Lionel, the guiding spirit of the storm, calmly retired to his own apartment, and, with perfect self-possession, addressed the following letter to his father:—

THE HON. LIONEL FITZOSBORNE  
TO LORD TRALEE.

“MY DEAR FATHER,  
“Since I last wrote to you, I am fully con-

firmed in all the opinions respecting Lord E. which I then expressed. In short, he is equally incorruptible in his political principles, and uncompromising in his religious professions; and, as proof, I will quote his own words, that 'no earthly consideration would tempt him to coalesce with, or even tolerate, any popular demagogue, who would endanger the liberties of the people, by uniting them to sedition, and still less any enterprising minister, who would compromise his king, and sacrifice his country, for his own aggrandisement.'

"I have heard you, my dear father, often say, that no man is so easily made to contradict himself as he who is exaggerated in the expression of his political creed. But I am sorry to perceive that Lord E. is too uniformly consistent to give me much hopes of bringing him over to our views. He is awful on the subject of Magna Charta; and, what is worse, no man can accuse him either of inattention, or inaptitude to parliamentary business.

"However, all is not yet lost. Through one

channel, I consider Lord E. is still vulnerable ; for he is effervescing with family pride, and that feeling, joined to his frequent boast of consistency, would induce him to befriend any party in the Upper House, to which his son might attach himself in the other. Besides, Lord C. is himself so individually popular with an interminable train of almost feudal adherents, who would, from habit, follow him in all his opinions, that I consider him an object of much greater consequence, than either his age or his character would have rendered probable.

“ To him, therefore, we must confine our attention. I flatter myself I have not, by any means, spent my time here unprofitably ; but the sisters do not suit me. Do you think we could make out a good family link any other way ? Tell Maria and Jenny to practise their music. Lord C. is passionately fond of Italian singing, and will soon leave this. But, between ourselves, I think he is rather steeled against ladies’ charms : if he was to lose a few thousands

in St. James's Street, perhaps a wife's fortune would reconcile him to the chains of matrimony. I merely throw out hints. You must be the artist to improve them. He is very difficult; but I have never yet been foiled, and, as I said before, my vanity is engaged on his subject. I had almost forgot to say, that I think his marrying Miss Fielding by no means so probable as when I last wrote. She is a pretty girl, and, if her uncle comes in, would be a good match for anybody. I am sure Lord Alton is coming over, for he has just left Richmond, and gone down to his castle in Westmoreland. A good sign: for we all know what fishing parties, and shooting parties, and riding parties, amongst privy counsellors, mean. Albeit, though unused to such disports, if I could only hear that the Marquis of A. had an opportune sprained ankle, or even a smart fit of the gout, or that Mr. B. had taken an instantaneous predilection for Newmarket, or gone into mourning for the death of a relation nobody ever heard of, I should consider the



whole ministry arranged. For these innocent deceits give to the experienced observer due intimation of sudden friendships, and incipient quarrels, of which the uninitiated never dream.

“ Lord Alton is gone to Westmoreland. Mr. Fielding has, this morning, set off after him—

Therefore—

Lord Alton is prime minister, and Mr. Fielding a bishop elect—

“ Whilst I remain,

“ Your Lordship’s dutiful, and affectionate Son,

“ LIONEL F.”

Whilst Mr. Fitzosborne was thus indulging speculations, alike congenial to his character, and consonant to his wishes, Mr. Fielding, with far other views, was prosecuting his journey towards Alton Forest. In leaving Julia at Ellesmere Park, he had only conformed to the usual habits of the two families, as, whenever business occasioned his absence from the rectory, his beloved daughter had always either remained under the maternal care of the

Countess, or, with reciprocal kindness, one, if not both, of the young friends had returned to the rectory as companions to Julia. But now, an unaccustomed sadness marked their separation, and he almost repented not having taken her with him to Lord Alton's, although, this time, her name was not mentioned in his Lordship's invitation, and his letter even hinted his wish that their communication should be confidential. By degrees, however, these melancholy feelings faded from the mind of the worthy Rector as he approached the venerable seat of his ancestors, from which he had been for so many years estranged ; the present almost faded from his view, as the circumstances which had caused that estrangement pressed on his recollection. But even those minute and harassing details which memory delights in recapitulating,

To former joys recurring ever,  
And turning all the past to pain,

fled beneath the giant efforts of reason and

resignation, and he recovered sufficient command of his wandering thoughts to think only of those blessings that still remained to him.

His benevolent disposition excluded not from this list the daughter of that woman whom he could scarcely remember with the common feelings of complacency; and, anxious to find excuse for Lady Harriet Moreton's errors, he retraced all that could be urged in their extenuation, as drawn from the peculiarities of her early fate, and connected with the characters of both her parents.

In recalling her mother to his mind, it was difficult for him to find one redeeming virtue on which his memory could rest; whilst in Lord Alton's character the only failing was that of pride: not that vulgar pride, which feeds on flattery, and glories in ostentation, but that overwrought sensibility, which shrinks from censure, and despises guilt. Possessed of a keen penetration, and still keener susceptibility, he probed at once the hearts of his associates; and whilst the dignified polite-

ness of his manners exhibited so smooth a surface, that no saliant angle rose to rebuff the professions of others' kindness, his own friendship was seldom offered spontaneously, and never bestowed except where esteem formed its basis. But proportioned to the deliberation with which he usually contracted intimacy, was the pertinacity with which he adhered to those whom he once had honoured with his regard.

In one solitary instance, the choice of his wife, Lord Alton had been hurried by the tumultuousness of passion into an unpremeditated act. But, perhaps, for that very reason he was the more tenacious on the subject. A few—a very few months sufficed to prove how little their characters were assimilated to each other; but this painful conviction preyed only on his own mind, whilst from others he endeavoured to conceal it with the most jealous watchfulness.

Finding that his complaisance but increased her arrogance, and his remonstrances but irritated her temper, he gave up all expectation of

regaining that domestic happiness which had been his early hope, and turned in despair to the turmoil of political life to divert his thoughts from individual misery.

Lady Alton's vanity soon led her to resent that estrangement of her husband's affections, which his pride led him to conceal from all the world beside; and whilst their private hours were spent in recrimination on her part, not unmingled with jealousy of his former attachment to her sister, (an accusation which he never condescended to repel,) in public he still endeavoured to hide the unfortunate result of his connexion with a character so uncongenial to his own, by invariably treating his wife with a degree of respect, amounting almost to adulation; and as he was thus the first to offer to Lady Alton all the homage her rank or beauty could command, so the slightest omission of it in others he would have been the last to pardon.

In his lovely daughter, Lord Alton might have found a solace for his other sorrows. But

with the puerile feelings of an inferior mind, Lady Alton resisted the interference, and repressed the affection, which her husband's heart yearned to offer to her child. His talents, therefore, the legitimate exercise of which might still have made his home delightful, were forced into another channel of display ; and the judgment, to whose dictates a nation bowed, was contumaciously disputed on his own hearth.

Thus the early years of the little Harriet were passed, without the benefit of example, in the varied duties of domestic virtue ; nor was Lady Alton, in any other point, capable of being the instructress of her daughter, who equally inherited her mother's beauty, and her father's sense. So long as Lady Harriet appeared the lovely infant, or the intelligent child, so long her mother's vanity was gratified, and her indiscriminating affection proportionably excited ; but when the opening graces of the girl seemed to promise future rivalry of charms, the unsubstantial partiality decreased ; and under the pretence of attending to an education

already radically defective, and of studying accomplishments for which nature marked no peculiar preference, Lady Harriet Fielding was gradually withdrawn from her mother's society, at an age when a mother's eye was most essential; and her future character, if not her future career, was intrusted to the mercenary care of a governess, who, at best, only understood those seductive arts in which her pupil too soon acquired proficiency.

On Lady Alton's death, another trial awaited Lady Harriet, as she was then suddenly transplanted from the nursery to the head of her father's princely establishment; and there it would have seemed she was enthroned, with a world for her footstool. But the actual fate of mortals seldom verifies the calculations of their fellow-men. One speck obscured the otherwise unclouded sun of her horizon—for all Lord Alton's estates were strictly entailed on the heir to his title; and the possibility of her father marrying again, as he was still comparatively young, continually haunted her ima-

gination. To avoid a doubtful evil, she, with the precipitancy of youth, incurred a greater one; and, in all the pride of beauty at nineteen, accepted General Warder for her husband, whose only recommendation was enormous wealth.

Still, with all her faults, Lord Alton's most acute sensibilities were centred in his daughter. Proud of her talents and of her beauty, he was painfully sensitive on the subject of her reputation; and while he gloried in the admiration she every where received, he shrunk tremblingly from the slightest breath of calumny, that, in tarnishing her fair fame, could doubly taint his own unsullied honour. Even her present situation in life, was not one that gave him satisfaction: for Sir Henry Moreton was a man, whom of all others he abhorred; and though, in the eye of the world, he appeared to sanction his daughter's marriage with him, it had, in fact, been the last blow to his own domestic happiness.



## CHAPTER XII.

## A NOBLEMAN'S CASTLE.

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'Tis not the splendour of the place,  
The gilded coach—the purse—the mace,  
And all the pompous train of state,  
With crowds which at your levee wait,  
That make you happy—make you great.

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TOWARDS the end of the third day after his leaving Ellesmere, Mr. Fielding's carriage turned up the long and magnificent avenue which led to the castle, where, for centuries, his ancestors had maintained an hospitality and splendour worthy of their exalted rank.

The noisy, fluttering finery of Weldon House

was not more dissimilar to the old-fashioned magnificence of Ellesmere, than both these places were to Alton Forest. The castle, seated on a promontory, commanded an extensive view of one of the most beautiful valleys in Westmoreland, and of a small, but romantic lake that lay, as it were, enshrined within its bosom. The forest, from which the estate took its name, fringed the borders of this silver mirror, and climbed more than half way up a dark and rugged mountain, which at one side jugged boldly into the water, whilst the opposite shore revelled in all the luxuriance of champaign scenery. The knoll, on which the castle stood, terminated the valley, which was encircled by apparently inaccessible mountains, and only opened towards the south ; and although its gardens and parks and pleasure-grounds were on the most extensive scale, such were the undulations of the ground, that looked upon from a distance they lost all individual character, and seemed but one mass of tangled woods and glens, crowded together in luxuriant vegetation.

It was evening, when Mr. Fielding, emerging

from amongst the hills which for the last day had impeded his journey, found himself driving rapidly along the level margin of the lake: the setting sun caught the towers of the castle, and tinged every angle of its battlements with its golden hues; whilst its base, and the rock on which it stood, and the woods that climbed its clefts, lay in the depth of shadow. The mountain and its forest looked darker still, and threw a long irregular image on the lake; but beyond the extremest verge of this reflection, the yellow sky laughed in the transparent water, whose receding circles carried a softened light to the more distant shore.

At the moment of Mr. Fielding's arrival, Lord Alton was passing from the dining-room to the vestibule with some gentlemen who were then his guests; and it was not, perhaps, displeasing to Mr. Fielding, to find in the presence of those strangers, and that of Lord Alton's numerous retinue, an inducement for the suppression of those contending feelings which might otherwise have been difficult to restrain.

Lord Alton's only weakness, if weakness it might be called, was a love of splendour, almost to excess. In all his different residences, his establishment was on a scale that few noblemen of England now keep up; but whenever he returned to this, the most ancient seat of his ancestors, his magnificence rivalled almost princely grandeur.

The late Lady Alton had seldom condescended to inhabit so remote a part of England. But during the few short visits which she had been almost compelled to make, the castle had always been the scene of gaiety and dissipation; and the costly furniture which, on every new sojourn, had been added to or renewed, received, even after her death, additional embellishment under the tasteful direction of Lady Harriet Moreton.

Correct in his own taste, and expensive, as well from principle as habit, Lord Alton considered it almost a duty to disburse amongst his own tenantry a large proportion of the revenues he derived from them; and on this

calculation, various improvements were continually carried on at the castle, even during his Lordship's frequent absence. Modern baths, improved conservatories, extended drives, a music-room, a statue-gallery, every ornament that the luxury of modern taste could add to the stability of ancient grandeur, was in turn appended to this magnificent residence; and the first hours after Mr. Fielding's arrival, were passed by him in unfeigned admiration of improvement, which, till seen, had appeared almost impossible, and totally unnecessary.

The internal arrangement of the castle was in uniformity with itself. Servants of every class, and superfluities of every description, anticipated even the wishes of the guests; whilst the whole arrangement was so methodical, and the daily state so habitual to its inmates, that the slightest innovation would have been immediately perceptible, even to the most indifferent observer. The soft Turkey carpets—the cushioned canopies—the perfumed cassettes, even to the wax-lights of his kitchens

and the Macadamization of his stables, all bespoke the well-calculated arrangements of a man of refinement ; whilst the lordly proprietor of the whole, too lofty to be elated by any extraneous dignity, and too proud to borrow lustre from the galaxy of splendour by which he was surrounded, seemed to walk in the light of his grandeur, undazzled by its brilliancy, and almost unaware of its effects.

Nothing could exceed the mild urbanity of Lord Alton's manners. Concentrated in himself, and innately conscious of his own value, he never condescended to assume those frivolous airs of factitious politeness that are sometimes adopted to conceal ignorance or propitiate popularity. In his own house, Lord Alton's guests scarcely perceived he was their host—so perfectly independent was their relationship to each other. In all other societies, he was the acknowledged guide ; but that distinction, like the rest of his honours, seemed to be bestowed on him not from any effort of his own, but from universal suffrage ; and so accustomed

did he feel to that public homage, that at home his chief endeavour seemed to be to obliterate that supremacy from the minds of his companions.

Two characters, so similar as were those of Mr. Fielding and his cousin, could scarcely be brought into contact with each other without mutual satisfaction ; for even the little differences, which had from a diversity of fate been contracted by each, served only, like the jutting stones of adjacent buildings, to attach them more closely together. The domestic scenes in which Mr. Fielding lived, had soothed any asperity of temper that, perhaps, had been the original sin in his character, and which stamped him with the fallibility of human nature ; whilst the exercise of every Christian virtue had cherished and matured all the kindlier feelings of his heart. On the other hand, Lord Alton's intercourse with the most talented amongst his contemporaries, in perfecting the natural acuteness of his own understanding, had taught him to prize, as it deserved, the blessing of such a

friend, whilst his polished elegance enabled him to evade, with dexterous kindness, the few points of disunion which might have subsisted between them.

The delight of unreserved confidence soon reunited these relatives in stricter bonds of friendship than ever ; and in their mutual communications, no subject of interest to either was omitted. With uncontrollable and unconcealed emotion, Lord Alton again and again expressed to Mr. Fielding his gratitude for the countenance he had already bestowed on Lady Harriet ; for with him, the calculations of the politician, and the refinement of the courtier, all melted in the thrilling emotions of parental affection. More than once did he rejoice in the prospect of her now receiving from her uncle that support and advice which her father unwillingly acknowledged was essential to her future welfare : and more than once did he recur to the advantages which might be expected from her association with Julia, whose friendship for her cousin he almost conde-



scended to implore. But whilst these anxious parents, with all the blindness of human error, were thus indulging in schemes of happiness and virtue, the very individuals who were the objects of their anxiety, tottered on the brink of all they most could deprecate.

Fitzosborne was too wise to risk the success of his well-laid schemes by prematurely hastening their conclusion. For the first day or two, therefore, he rather chose to absent himself from Lady Ellesmere's drawing-room, and this he did with the more security, as he knew that Lord Calvert and his father were engaged in signing as many new leases as he calculated would occupy them as long as he required. About the time when Mr. Fielding's journey towards Alton Forest was near its conclusion, Lionel came to the resolution of calling to his aid the charms and talents of Lady Harriet Moreton, and mounting his horse, he set off at a brisk pace towards Broomhill barracks. But no sooner did he find himself out of sight of Ellesmere House, than, letting the reins almost

fall on his horse's neck, he pursued his way absorbed in meditation.

The tangled thickets, the spreading oaks, the smooth, broad, winding river, and all the woodland scenery of Ellesmere Park, spread not their beauties for his gaze. His eyes, it is true, rested mechanically on their beauties, but the power of internal vision was alone exercised by him, and he passed the porter's lodge almost unconsciously; and slow as his horse's foot could fall, he skirted the park gates, and passed up the shaded road that, following the windings of the fence, leads circuitously to Fairton Bridge, till, at length, the clattering of his horse's hoofs on its pavement, roused him from his deep reverie, and, clapping spurs to his steed, he galloped onwards. But long before he reached Lady Harriet's apartments, he had smoothed all traces of anxiety from his brow, and resumed the usually tranquil expression of his countenance.

On entering her apartment, he found her as he anticipated—alone; and, as he likewise anti-

cipated, her reception of him was more indicative of anger than of any other feeling. A silence of some minutes ensued, and the unmoved countenance of Fitzosborne, disengaged as it was from all apparent feeling, even of embarrassment, was strongly contrasted with the agitated, almost exasperated looks of his fair companion. At last she exclaimed with haughty but forced composure, "I am glad to find, Mr. Fitzosborne, you are still in this country. I thought you had returned to town."

"You could not surely think, Lady Harriet, that I should go to London without receiving your commands."

"On the contrary, I concluded you had totally forgotten me. Sir Henry and I ——"

"Sir Henry and you! it is impossible I could ever forget—either." A malicious emphasis marked these words; but the deep bow with which they were accompanied, concealed any other expression of the feeling in which they were uttered.

"I once thought of writing to know if you were still alive."

“ And why was I not so blessed ? it would not have been the first time, nor I hope the last.” He now fixed his eyes full on Lady Harriet’s face, and nothing could be more provoking than the expression of his own countenance. No feeling but that of self-conceit was manifest, whilst the smile of satisfied vanity played round his beautiful mouth, and the bitterness of irony was concealed in the tones of harmony itself.

“ Mr. Fitzosborne, I am not to be trifled with ; none shall injure or even neglect me with impunity ;” and her little foot stamped with passion on the ground, and her dark eyes flashed lightning on her beaming cheek.

“ Dear Lady Harriet, be for once consistent ! did not you tell me yourself of Sir Henry’s jealousy ? though you best know how little *I* deserved it. Did not you tell me that here, in this particular neighbourhood, you were especially anxious on the subject of the most punctilious propriety ?”

“ Talk not to me of proprieties and nonsense,” interrupted she : “ here, in this par-

ticular neighbourhood, I *am* especially anxious to be treated with every possible attention and respect."

"Respect, Lady Harriet! you have so often tutored me on that subject, that believe me I can never forget your lessons."

"But I never told you to shun me as you would a basilisk."

"Say Circe rather"—and the sigh that accompanied this sentence, came like the breath of summer with healing on its wings.

"And, Lionel, why should you so sedulously have avoided me the other day? Are your new acquaintances, those Ladies Calvert, so irresistible? Is it possible that Lady Weldon speaks truly, and that you are going to marry one of them?"

"By all that's sacred she says false—they are nothing to me; nay more, if there is a human being in a female form that I could abhor, it would be——Lady Matilda Calvert."

And now the radiance of her eye was more than reflected in the dark flash of his; and for once the spirit of truth rested on the lip of

scorn, for the energy of passion had in a moment revealed what hitherto he had denied, even to himself; and the new-born demon of hatred rose at once to his view, confirmed and confessed.

“Abhor Lady Matilda Calvert! and for what?” slowly interrogated Lady Harriet, as if revolving in her own mind the origin of this sudden feeling.

“Lady Matilda is a cold, dispassionate, scrutinising being, whom no flattery can bribe, and I doubt if any danger could deter. I see she already dares to question my right of influencing her brother, and either her spirit or mine must yield.”

“Then, marry her, Lionel!” And the bitter laugh with which Lady Harriet accompanied these words, seemed like a vampire’s cry.

“What! marry for hate!—your Ladyship goes even beyond me there:” and Fitzosborne shuddered involuntarily.

“And who is the fool that would marry for love?” The deep hollow voice of intense feeling marked this interrogatory. Lionel looked

on her trembling lip—her flashing eye ; that lip that once seemed to him the very harbinger of joy ; that eye, whose beam could have unfolded heaven to his view. How changed were now his feelings ! Pity for a moment struggled with a sentiment of a less gentle kind ; but the form of Julia Fielding rose to his memory, and his heart silently confessed, that even he might be that fool.

Lady Harriet first recovered herself, and continued. “ And tell me, Fitzosborne, how do you get on with Lord Calvert ? ”

“ If he had half the obstinacy I give his sister credit for, I should despair of guiding him.”

“ I cannot quite understand why he is an object of so much consequence to you. You will never teach me politics, I’m afraid.”

“ Nay, do me justice, I am as anxious about him for your father’s sake as for my own.”

“ As how ? has he a great many votes ? ”

“ He has ; but they are trifles in the scale, compared with the weight which Lord Elles-

mere's single vote would give to any minister."

" Oh! I understand! So Lord Tralee wants to recommend himself to whoever may be the new minister, by bringing Lords Ellesmere and Calvert in his train; and for this purpose you are the coiled serpent placed in their path to entrap them in your maze."

" Your Ladyship is severe. But as the public voice calls on Lord Alton as the only man not of the present administration worthy to be our chief—I acknowledge ——"

" Come, Fitzosborne, you had better acknowledge the whole truth at once. We know each other too well for any dissimulation to be of use to either."

Again Fitzosborne felt that he was in the presence of one who was a proficient in those arts on which he most prided himself, and this conviction, in some degree, reinstated his admiration of Lady Harriet's talents.

" Well then, since, as usual, you are my confessor, I will whisper—mind, only whisper—



that I am afraid my father is a little in a dilemma at present."

"What! Lord Tralee has drained the orange and wants to throw away the rind, eh? he has exhausted the munificence of this ministry, and is therefore anxious to have them turned out? A good specimen of a politician's gratitude!"

"I am not certain that my father has at all made up his mind as to which side he will vote with this session—it depends entirely on circumstances."

"Yes, we all know that my good friend Tralee has so often changed sides, that his vote is scarcely saleable now—like a bad guinea worn out, even his brass has lost the king's countenance."

"How very provoking you are! and how provoking it is that one cannot be angry at you!"

"Nay, I only hate circumlocution, and want to come at once to the point—And as to the Calvert?"

"Why, unless you help me, I am afraid Lord Ellesmere and Lady Matilda will, together, destroy all my plans for him."

“ I declare, Fitz, at all events he has improved you decidedly ; I never heard you speak so humbly of your own abilities before.”

Lady Harriet's countenance showed that her displeasure had faded away ; and Lionel, conscious of his victory, could scarcely conceal the consequent exultation, although it contradicted her Ladyship's eulogium.

“ I really almost despair of Calvert,” continued he, in his humblest tone,—“ he is too volatile to be guided by precept ; too fastidious to be led by example ; too rich to be impelled by fear : in short, we shall have another pertinacious Lord Ellesmere, unless you, Lady Harriet, undertake his education.”

“ *Eh bien ! j'en suis contente.* But if I am to act La Dame Blanche for the benefit of your future diplomacy, you must explain to me what you want to do with him.”

“ I want to make him minister at war, or an ambassador extraordinary, that I may have the honour of being his secretary ; in short, I want your father to be prime minister, and Lord Ellesmere his co-adjutor.”

“ And you and your friend to be deputy pillars of the state ! Well, certainly, Fitz, your plans are modest and ingenious ; but I really do not perceive how I can forward them.”

“ *Reine des amours !* you must have left your sagacity in London. In the first place, you must, I am sure, have discovered already, that nothing would better please the Ellesmere coterie, than that Lord Calvert should marry your Ladyship’s pretty cousin, Julia Fielding, and subside at once into a good, quiet, country gentleman.”

“ *Mais quel ménage !*” exclaimed Lady Harriet, with a look of horror. “ Really, Lord Calvert is much too handsome and agreeable to be allowed to sink into such irrecoverable bathos—and then adieu, Lionel, to your secretaryship.”

“ Exactly. Now Miss Fielding is, at present, actually staying at Ellesmere; and it will be quite a charity in you to keep Lord Calvert out of the snare.”

“ My dear Lionel, you know you may always

command my services. But as to my undertaking that prime starched piece of antiquity, Lady Ellesmere, 'tis quite out of the question. Another sight of her little pinched turban would absolutely give me the *tic douloureux*."

"But Birnam Wood may be brought to Dunsinane. If you only bestow half a dozen smiles on him, they will be more than sufficient to keep him out of harm's way till next week, and then, you know, the grousing begins. *A propos*, here is Sir Henry. Colonel, I must make my apologies to you, as I have already done to Lady Harriet, for my having been so long without calling on you. But, really, I have been so beset with Devon cows, and plans for cottages, that I never could emancipate myself till to-day."

Sir Henry received this compliment in much the same spirit in which it was offered. But Captain Brisbane, who, with other officers, had accompanied Sir Henry, exclaimed, "Emancipated yourself! So Miss Fielding's long eye-

lashes have enthralled you, as well as others?" and the Captain's eyes, though not his head, turned towards Mr. Jessop.

"She is certainly a very pretty girl," observed Major Crosbie to Lady Harriet; "but I agree with your Ladyship she wants a certain *tournure*."

"That is to say, she wants a certain *courtisane*; eh! Major?" rejoined Sir Henry, with infinite affability.

"Well, Crosbie," said Captain Brisbane, "if you had only listened the other evening to her singing, instead of to Lady Weldon's complaining, you would, I suppose, have been as much captivated as poor Jessop here."

"*Par exemple*," interrupted Sir Henry, "did you ever see an invalid with so good an appetite as Lady Weldon?"

"She should positively take a *bouillon* before dinner," observed Lady Harriet, in the gentlest tone of sympathy. (Lady Weldon had omitted her luncheons on the day of Lady Harriet's breakfast.)

“And apply cold cream to her cheeks after dinner,” rejoined Mr. Jessop, with an expressive shrug.

“Do you know, Fitzosborne,” said Major Crosbie, “Jessop declares the two Misses Weldon are *les petites Danaïdes*; for that any man who dances with them must infallibly die of the same.”

“All envy of Miss Weldon’s decided preference of you, Crosbie,” resumed Sir Henry. “But, Mr. Fitzosborne, as I must exonerate you from the accusation of being caught by our country cousin, allow me to ask, is it the gay Louisa, or the stately Matilda that keeps you in bondage at Ellesmere? for, the other day, at Mrs. Colon’s, Mrs. Masham declared that she knew from the best authority, you were come down on purpose to propose for one or other, if not both.”

“By the bye, Colonel, what sort of a day had you at Colon’s?”

“Just what I expected. You know at such a house one always looks for mutton at the

head, mutton at the foot, and the rest of the sheep in candles."

"Ay! She is one of the blue-stockings. The Lord defend me from learned ladies, and ourang-outangs! I sat next to her at Weldon's; so I took good care to send my excuse this time." And Major Crosbie shuddered at the recollection of his last visitation.

"I fancy the Ladies Calvert are a little of the literati too. Every body writes now. All the new novels are said to be by ladies of distinction — some Lady W. or other," observed Lionel, looking steadily at Lady Harriet.

"Lady Louisa Calvert seems a very pleasant person," remarked Mr. Jessop, in his usual calm tone, as he quietly dusted his spurs, whilst he lounged on the ottoman; "but I doubt whether Lady Matilda is not quite inaccessible."

"And Miss Fielding, Jessop? let us hear your decision upon her," inquired Captain Brisbane.

"You have passed sentence on the Weldons,

and on the Calverts," rejoined Major Crosbie ;  
" now, most potent, grave, and reverend Signor,  
will you allow us to admire *la belle Julie* ?

" If she was a little fatter, I think she would  
be the most beautiful girl I ever beheld ; at  
present she looks almost too delicate."

" The more angelical," replied Sir Henry ;  
" and assuredly, Jessop, she must have some  
celestial power to attract your admiration ; for I  
never heard you praise any *girl* so much be-  
fore."

" She is rather too thin," observed Fitzosborne.

" And she should never wear yellow ribands,"  
continued Mr. Jessop. "*Soupirs étouffés* or  
*ailes de pigeon* are good colours for a *blonde* ;  
—don't you think so, Lady Harriet ?"

" I have not thought quite so much upon  
the subject as you seem to have done, Mr.  
Jessop ; but I agree with you that she is not a  
good dresser."

Mr. Jessop made no reply ; and the conver-  
sation digressing to a critique on the last  
change of uniform, Fitzosborne was, as usual,



applied to as the best possible authority for taste. The newest cut in shirt collars, and a *comparaison* between an Anglesea and a Townshend, having superseded all thoughts of the fairer part of creation, Lionel at last took his departure, leaving Lady Harriet fully impressed with the belief of his perfect indifference to all the ladies at Ellesmere, whilst he returned there to watch the slightest variation in Lord Calvert's open countenance, and to conceal, as he best could, his own unbounded admiration of Julia Fielding.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## JEALOUSY.

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What! keep a week away? Seven days and nights?  
Eighty-eight hours?

OTHELLO.

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THE answer which Fitzosborne received from his father to his last letter, confirmed his previous suspicion that all was not going on in the world of politics as Lord Tralee could have desired. His Lordship's communications were too reserved, and his expressions too guarded to give even his son a correct insight into the

whole truth ; but, by the aid of long experience, Lionel discovered even a greater portion of it than it was his father's intention to confide.

He perceived that some of Lord Tralee's machinations, or, in the phraseology of politics, his " designs," were on the point of being discovered ; and it was evidently of the greatest consequence to him to adopt immediately some judicious, but decisive measure ; — in other words, that he should, without loss of time, secure his own personal safety, either by betraying the secret instructions of the present minister to his enemies, or that he should give up to him the under agent, who, at Lord Tralee's own suggestion, and for Lord Tralee's own emolument, had exceeded those orders, and converted a judicious measure into positive oppression. A victim must be found to expiate the wrong which, by some unknown accident, had transpired ; and the only doubt which remained on Lord Tralee's mind was, whether to sacrifice his patron or his slave ; and this alternative rested solely on the balance of

chances as to whether Lord Alton did, or did not, intend to displace the present minister.

In politics, as in war, anticipation is the very blossom of time ; and he who knows but to gain it, gathers, in one grasp, all that is worth obtaining. In this view, the information Lionel had sent respecting Lord Alton had been invaluable to his father, as he thought ; but his thanks conveyed his sense of its value too extravagantly ; and Fitzosborne judging from various little circumstances that Lord Tralee was scarcely steady on the pinnacle to which he had so lately climbed, he determined to lose no time in making his own ground good with the Alton party, even though his doing so might entail his desertion of his father. And as no plan seemed more certain of cementing his connexion with Lord Alton than marrying his niece, his determination to separate Julia and Lord Calvert was but the more confirmed, whilst even the master passion of his mind thus contributed to strengthen the unrestrained attachment which he had so suddenly conceived for her.

To exclude Lord Calvert from Miss Fielding's society, as much as possible, was his first object, and with this view he gladly delivered to him an invitation from Sir Henry Moreton to join a fishing-party on the following day ; at the same time, expressing his own regret at not having skill enough to be admitted as a worthy participator in the sport.

" I never knew you were fond of fishing, Calvert," observed Lord Ellesmere, as he was leaving the room ; " but if you are, I advise you to take Sir Henry to the fall of the river, near the garden."

" If you go there, Calvert, of course the ladies will follow in your train," rejoined Lionel.

" Not to a fishing scene, I hope," answered Lord Calvert, with some asperity.

" Oh ! you do not guess what attractions we may find," gaily replied Lady Louisa. " Julia, I am decidedly for being of the party ; for perhaps we may meet ' all the officers,' as Anna Weldon calls them ; and you know she told

you yesterday you had already made a conquest of Mr. Jessop."

"I hope, Louisa, you told her in return that she had made a conquest of somebody. You know that is all she wanted," said Julia, not without embarrassment.

"Well, Miss Fielding, allow me to congratulate you on your prize," rejoined Lord Calvert. Mr. Jessop is a *beau par excellence*."

"His merits have hitherto been lost upon me, I own; but I am always willing to submit to your Lordship's judgment."

"Calvert, did you hear that? I am afraid, Miss Fielding, you will make him too vain," said Fitzosborne, with more meaning in his eyes than his mere words conveyed.

"I am much flattered by Miss Fielding's deference to my opinion, though I trust she will in future be decided by her own judgment alone."

"I only confessed my ignorance on the subject of Mr. Jessop's merits," said Julia, in a subdued tone; for there was something in Lord

Calvert's manner that wounded her to the soul.

"And where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise," replied Fitzosborne carelessly.

"Have you any message to Sir Henry Moreton, Fitzosborne?" inquired Lord Calvert. "I am going to call upon him." And so saying, he rose to leave the room. Lady Louisa playfully followed him to inquire further particulars about the fishing party, and Julia and Fitzosborne were left alone.

A silence of some minutes ensued. Julia was absorbed in painful thought, and Lionel sat with his eyes intently fixed on her intelligent countenance.

"Poor Calvert!" exclaimed he at last, in the softest tone of sympathy. "I am half sorry I told him his love was come to London: he has scarcely been like himself since. Don't you perceive an alteration in his manner within this day or two, or is it only my fancy, Miss Fielding?"

Julia had indeed perceived a most distressing alteration in his manner, for which she had

vainly endeavoured to assign a cause. It seemed as if Lionel had at once unravelled the mystery ; and a few moments passed in recollecting all the little indescribable incongruities in Lord Calvert's manner, which now Fitzosborne's suggestion sufficiently explained.

“ Is the Contessa Montalvina handsome ? ” inquired Julia, unconscious of the clue this query gave to her inmost thoughts.

“ No, not positively handsome. I should rather say positively not handsome, judging of the specimen of perfect beauty I have lately seen. But she sings divinely : that arietta you sang last night, which Lord Calvert encored, was her *chef-d'œuvre*, and your voice reminded me astonishingly of hers.”

That was a fib ; for Fitzosborne had never heard La Montalvina sing that particular arietta ; but the impromptu sufficiently answered his purpose of destroying the effect of Lord Calvert's admiration of Julia's singing, which he had involuntarily expressed the night before somewhat too unguardedly, and which poor



Julia had since thought of again and again with pleasure : her reflections on this point were now changed. " So ! he was thinking all the time of that Contessa Montalvina ! How could I have happened to sing that old song ? it is a frightful tune." This, and much more, she thought in silence : meantime, Fitzosborne's protracted gaze was almost distressing : at last, she sufficiently collected her ideas to turn the conversation on more general subjects. Music was one of the many on which Lionel could talk to admiration : he was sufficiently learned on it to be judicious ; and that winning voice and interesting countenance, which marked his slightest observations, gave indescribable value to even his most casual remark on this most animating theme.

Julia was at work ; and perhaps her silken eye-lashes never appeared more beautiful than when she was looking down : he, meanwhile, was seated opposite to her ; sometimes, in the enthusiasm of the moment, he leant his arms on the table, and watched every hue of feel-

ing that passed over her countenance as she spoke : for hers was that varying complexion in which

The eloquent blood so in her body wrought,  
You could almost have said her body thought.

At other times, the pen that he mechanically held, traced unconsciously the beautiful outline of her profile, and then the next instant it was obliterated from all but his memory. Again, leaning back on his chair, as the light fell on his own polished brow and manly countenance, he attended only to making his conversation agreeable to Julia, whose thoughts he intuitively divined, and whose tastes he seemed to express by anticipation as his own ; and in this he in part succeeded : for when had Lionel Fitzosborne failed in obtaining the suffrage of all with whom he associated ?

“Hours were moments near her ;” and neither Lionel nor Julia were aware how many had passed, till Lady Matilda’s entrance interrupted their *tête-à-tête*. Her presence was always a

restraint on him ; and he soon after retired, anxious to meditate on those hopes, which Julia's complacent manner to him had insensibly increased.

“ I am glad that man is gone,” observed Lady Matilda. “ What can induce my brother to be so partial to him, I cannot imagine.”

“ I assure you, Matilda, he has been uncommonly agreeable for this last half hour ; I never saw him so much so before. Indeed, at first, I almost disliked him, but now I think him very sensible ; and I am sure he is very fond of Lord Calvert.”

“ Does he ever talk to you about Oswald ?” And as Lady Matilda said this, her glance was as penetrating as even Lionel's could have been.

“ Yes—no : he only said he was sorry that he had told Lord Calvert the Countess Montalvina was arrived.”

“ And why should he be sorry ? I am certain—I am positive, Julia, the Countess Montalvina is nothing to my brother : I know he is perfectly indifferent to her.”

However intimate Julia had always been with Lord Calvert's sister, pride and delicacy had alike forbidden the confession of her own feelings in regard to him; for their intercourse had always been that of generous disinterested friendship, and not the puerile confidence of whispering girls. If, in days of happiness, Julia had studiously evaded all allusion to that partiality which on Lord Calvert's part had been almost avowed, her hereditary pride now forbade her acknowledging almost to her own heart, that in her estimation of that partiality she had been in any degree mistaken; but now there was an earnestness in Lady Matilda's assurance of what Julia most wished to believe, that overcame her fluttered spirits; and, affected beyond the power of resistance, she covered her burning blushes with her hands, and burst into a flood of tears.

"Dearest Julia," whispered her kind counsellor, as she kissed her fevered forehead, "how can you believe, Julia, that my brother prefers any woman to you? let me for once speak unreservedly on the subject nearest my

heart. You know—you must know that you alone are Calvert's choice."

"No—no, Matilda, indeed you are mistaken; Lord Calvert has no thought of me but as an old friend; the companion of his childhood—the playfellow of his sisters."

"Do not, Julia, be so unjust either to him or to yourself: sometimes, I own, Oswald's conduct puzzles me; but of his sentiments I feel assured."

"Stop! stop! Matilda, you are but re-exciting a vanity, which has already brought its own punishment. Lord Calvert is always kind and good-natured to me; but in this house you know he has no alternative."

Lady Matilda shook her head in token of dissent; but their further conversation was interrupted, as Lady Ellesmere's hour for driving out was arrived, and her footman had come to summon the young ladies to accompany her.

Short as this their first confidence had been, the two friends were almost equally engrossed by the recollection of it during the rest of the

morning. In Julia's breast, the dazzling ray of hope again danced as on a brilliant mirror; and though in her character there was as little of the alloy of vanity as ever fell to woman's share, yet a thousand little imperceptible traits led her mind gradually back to the not unwilling conviction of Lord Calvert's attachment. There is a talisman in love that gives an interpretation to the most casual look or action, far different from that which it bears to an uninterested observer; and with this magic aid, Julia now recalled many a little anecdote, which, considered collectively, gave weight to those assertions she wished to believe. His minute recollection of many a scene of childish happiness which they had passed together—the proofs he almost involuntarily had given, that even in his most distant sojournings her image had seldom been forgotten—the delight with which more than once he had repeated those passages from his sister's correspondence that conveyed any message Julia had ever sent him, and the gratitude he expressed whenever he

learned that she had preserved his gifts—these, and the remembrance of many a look too transient to be told—too marked to be mistaken, again renovated the unavowed hopes of the artless girl ; and, with a fluttering joy, she anticipated his return, determined no longer to distrust or injure him by unmerited suspicions.

Lady Matilda's meditations were not less interrupted, though infinitely more composed : her penetration had already led her to discover, that the smooth surface of Fitzosborne's manner was merely an external stratum, beneath which was a stream of fire. His looks had betrayed to her his admiration of Julia, whilst her own wishes prompted her to insure for her brother, if possible, the prize which seemed so coveted by all ; and, with mistaken kindness, she therefore determined to speak to Lord Calvert on the subject, believing, that to be unreserved would best insure success to her kind and disinterested plans.

The opportunity for doing so did not, however, immediately occur ; for, before dinner, Lord

Calvert sent for his servant and things to dress, having determined to dine with the officers' mess: and the charms of Lady Harriet Moreton's conversation in the evening, joined to Sir Henry's affability and hospitality, detained him at the Barracks beyond the early hours at which the Ellesmere party usually separated.

Meantime, the evening at the Park passed with unwonted swiftness: the agitation of Julia's spirits gave new lustre to her eye, and new radiance to her cheek. She was happy; and with all the innocence of youth, her happiness was manifest in the elasticity of her step, and the playfulness of her smile: whilst Fitzosborne, with equal surprise and admiration, gazed on her brilliant beauty. His creed, like that of Solomon, was, that all is vanity; and, acting upon this premise, his attentions to Miss Fielding became less restrained, as, in the gaiety of the moment, she accepted, rather than repulsed them. His mellow voice joined in the airs which she and Lady Louisa sang together; and Lord and Lady Ellesmere observed to each other with



surprise, that intimacy but revealed new talents in the gifted Fitzosborne.

The next morning, it was late before Lord Calvert joined the breakfast party; and his looks gave indication that his vigils had not been passed in equal serenity with theirs. Scarcely noticing the party, he abruptly inquired of Lady Ellesmere how many beds could now be made up at Marley Cottage; adding, that he had promised to give Sir Henry Moreton a week's fishing there, if she and his father had not any other arrangement for its temporary occupation.

"My dear Oswald, I think, as far as the rooms go, you will find it very comfortable. Old Chamberlane and his wife are there still; but what will you do in your table arrangements?"

"Why, Lady Ellesmere," said the good old Earl, always anxious to contribute to his son's comfort, "don't you think Mrs. Crumpet could fill the caravan with some of the contents of our larder. How long do you think you will stay there, Calvert?"

“ I suppose our party will last a week or ten days : I have promised to go to-day with Sir Henry and Lady Harriet to Hurtle Moor on our way ; and by Tuesday or Wednesday we shall get to Marley Cottage.”

“ Well, by that time every thing shall be prepared. I will send Mrs. Crumpet herself, the under footman, John Baker, Susan Doyle”—

“ My dear mother, don't think of sending such a tribe. You know I have often told you that Monsieur Laroche is one of the best cooks I know ; he came to me in despair the other day, saying, that ‘ *ses talens seroient flétris* ’ in the idleness of Ellesmere. And as I don't let him lay out my things to dress more than three times a day, he will be delighted to get back to his old *métier, d'un Cuisinier de voyage*.”

“ But, my dear Oswald, Sir Henry and Lady Harriet”—

“ Oh ! the whole party is to be a bivouac : he brings his *fac-totum*—she goes without a *femme-de-chambre* : any thing like regularity would destroy the whole pleasure of the

scheme. Fitzosborne, what do you say to it? I sent you Sir Henry's note this morning; I hope Laroche, in his delight, did not forget to give it to you?"

Lionel had received sufficient intimation to enable him to have his answer ready:

"Nothing in the world I should like better: such a party is the thing of all others I like best; but unfortunately my holidays are at an end—I must leave this, I am sorry to say, to-morrow, or next day." As he said this, Fitzosborne made one of his best bows to Lady Ellesmere.

This intelligence had the effect he anticipated: earnest solicitations were pressed upon him to remain even a few days longer; to all of which he appeared inflexible; till at last Lord Calvert said, "Fitzosborne, since you will not come to Marley, you must do this—wait for me here, and, *coûte qu'il coûte*, I will return this day week; and the next day I promise to accompany you, at least part of your journey."

"What, do you leave us so soon, Calvert?" said Lady Matilda, in a tone of disappointment.

“ Yes, I have promised to be in London by the 20th; and thus I only lose a day or two of your company, Matilda:”—a suppressed sigh accompanied these words.

Julia recollected the arrival in London of La Contessa Montalvina. Lady Ellesmere thought only of Mrs. Crumpet and tartlets. Fitzosborne looked steadily at Miss Fielding, but said nothing; but Lady Matilda determined to lose no time in speaking to her brother, and therefore rose to follow him a few minutes after he had left the room.

She found him in the hall, mechanically busy in arranging his fishing-tackle. But his favourite spaniel lay unnoticed at his feet, and his thoughts seemed otherwise engaged than by the occupations of his fingers. Lady Matilda drew her chair close to his, and after helping him to arrange some silken flies, said, “ I am very sorry you are going away, Oswald, —very sorry, particularly just now.”

“ And why just now, Matilda ?”

“ Because Julia Fielding is here; and I thought—”

“ You thought, Matilda, to shut us both up in a cage together, didn’t you ?”—And the tone of bitterness with which Lord Calvert said this, was far unlike that of frank and honest cheerfulness, which formerly was habitual to him.

“ I *thought*, Oswald, that that dear girl was such a favourite of yours, that she would have helped to relieve the *ennui* I am afraid you feel here.”

“ And what does *she* think, Matilda?—you are such confidants, no doubt you know all her sentiments.” And now it was his turn to look with a scrutinizing gaze. Lady Matilda’s pride for her friend, was wounded by the cold superciliousness of his manner, and she hastily answered—

“ I really have not heard her express any thoughts or wishes on the subject.”

“ Come, Matilda, confess the truth; *la belle Julie*, if left to herself, would be perfectly indifferent, whether I went or stayed.”—And he whistled, as if careless even of her answer.

“ Upon my word, you men are strange crea-

tures," rejoined she, somewhat indignantly, "you never know your own minds a month together."

"It would be well, if you ladies knew your own as long; but see, Matilda, there's the currie, and I am not half ready yet."—So saying, he hastily left her; not being sorry thus to terminate what he almost designated an unpleasant catechism.

## CHAPTER XIV.

A STRATAGEM.

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You may remember how the sulky elf,  
For to your worships so he must have seem'd,  
Rode forth, with no companion but himself.

RICCIARDETTO.

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IT has been said, that no man ever appeared a hero to his *valet-de-chambre* ; and this morning poor Lord Calvert verified the observation. His feelings were agitated, and his temper irritated, as, turning from Lady Matilda, he strode up stairs, three steps at a time, and hurried into his own apartment to expedite his departure.

On opening the door, he beheld Monsieur Laroché vigorously engaged in all the delightful bustle of packing up. The zealous valet had taken off his own blue coat, and had it carefully suspended on the back of an arm-chair, along with two of his neckcloths, for the purpose of being less restrained in his operations, whilst he fearlessly trusted to his three waistcoats and his own labours for being sufficiently warm, even in England, on a sunny day in August: meantime, his *talent* was fully displayed, even in the appearance of the room. Every chair was in occupation, either by supporting trunks or their contents: the doors of the wardrobes were thrown open; the drawers pulled out, and laid on the floor; whilst bed, couch, tables, and carpet, were alike strewn with brushes, boot-legs, hat-sticks, stocks, gloves, bottles of blacking, wash-balls, *caraffes de parfumerie*, soap-boxes, flints, fishing-rods, curling-irons, wadding-papers, rolls of shoe and watch ribbons, and all the other *et cetera* of a gentleman's toilet, not excepting sundry



little accessories not intended for public inspection.

The labour we delight in physics pain ;

and Monsieur Laroche had time to sing a whole *refrain* of “ *Dans un délire* ” in a shrill minor, as he was folding up, with mathematical precision, the sleeves of a pink-striped shirt, when his harmony was interrupted by the abrupt entrance of Lord Calvert, who exclaimed, in no gentle voice, as he kicked across the floor as many shoes and boots as might have supplied a yeomanry corps—“ Why, what the devil are you doing, Laroche, with all these boots about the room ? ”

“ Soyez tranquille, milord—soyez tranquille ; ils seront tous emballés dans un clin d’œil.”

“ God forbid ! do you think I would be bored by taking such lumber ? Make haste, do, and put up the things I ordered—nothing more.”

“ Eh ! bien, je ne mettrai donc dans la vache, que dix paires de bottes, quinze paires de—”

“ Dix paires ! Vache ! Ass, rather. I tell

you I am going in the curricie, and the driving-seat will hold—”

“ Bah ! mais la voiture de voyage nous suivra, n'est-ce pas ? ou du moins la calèche ? ”

“ I tell you, sir, the curricie is at the door ; give John my night-sack and dressing-box, directly.”

“ Eh bien, milord ! cela m'est égal. Le beau valet que ce jockey Monsieur John fera ! C'est joliment arrangé !—Bah ! il sait bien son métier sans doute. Il peut atteler un cheval, ou même deux ; mais qu'il me coiffe moi, Dieu m'en garde ! Mais chacun a son goût. D'abord les usages de ce pays-ci m'étonnent moi ! et nous autres, le goût nous a bien pris d'être tout-à-fait Anglois. Mais cela passera—cela passera—c'est moi qui le dis—nous verrons, tout cela passera—”

How much longer the disappointed Mr. La-roche might have soothed his griefs by continuing the soliloquy, is doubtful. Lord Calvert had thrown himself unconsciously in the very chair which was already graced by the

blue coat of his much-affronted valet. His first feeling was that of impatience to be gone; his next, regret at ever having come within reach of "that cold, heartless Julia Fielding:" then his conscience reproached him for this unjust and ungenerous appreciation of her character. His memory retraced many a blush, and many a smile thus contradicted it; and the question, "why the devil should I go away?" rose point blank to his mind. Another moment, and the chair was drawn close to the table. The whole shaving apparatus was thrown down, to make room for the portfolio. An apology was to be composed; and, in order to arrange his ideas, the pen full of ink was deliberately shook over the flaps of Monsieur Laroche's coat.

"Du moins, monsieur, épargnez mon habit, s'il vous plaît," ejaculated the valet, in a tone of utter despair.

"Va-t-en au diable ! et dépêchez-vous !" — And Lord Calvert started up, throwing the paper into the fire, and his resolution to the dogs.

Poor Laroche, snatching up his coat, threw it rather on his head than his shoulders, and forgetting his cravat, bustled out of the room, muttering, as he closed the door, “Jamais je ne l’ai vu ainsi. Dieu veuille que nous ne sommes pas encore amoureux !”

There was a something in his countenance so expressive of submission and distress, that at once recalled Lord Calvert to himself; and hallooing after him, he repaired all his faults, by telling the faithful creature he might follow in the *calèche*, and bring whatever he wanted, either for himself or his master; adding, with a good-humoured smile, “Et tu peux même apporter des casseroles tant que tu voudras. Je t’emmène exprès pour montrer à Sir Henry ce que c’est qu’un vrai turban de Poisson. D’abord j’ai beaucoup vanté ton savoir-faire.”

“Monsieur, milord, mille graces—je suis infiniment sensible à toutes vos bontés—j’espère—je me flatte—” Here he was interrupted by the entrance of Lionel Fitzosborne, and leaving the two gentlemen together, he skipped down

stairs, exclaiming, “ Ah ! le bon enfant ! il est toujours le même, un peu vif de temps en temps —mais le cœur ! il a le cœur comme quatre.”

Fitzosborne, scarcely waiting for an invitation to sit down, drew his chair close to that of Lord Calvert : an agitation, partly affected and partly genuine, marked his countenance, for the scene he had now to act was one of difficulty ; he nevertheless was the first to break silence.

“ Calvert, have you any commands to town ? I think I shall be off to-morrow.”

“ Why, what the devil hurries *you* away ?” inquired Lord Calvert, almost angrily ; “ I thought you would stay till my return.”

“ I think I had better not ; it is wiser of me to go away when I can.”

“ I really don’t understand you at times, Fitzosborne ; certainly no person wishes to force your inclinations.”

“ I am only fearful my inclinations may be too strong for the guidance of my judgment. In short, Calvert, I am come for the very pur-

pose of consulting you on a very delicate subject."

"What is it?" demanded Lord Calvert, in almost breathless eagerness.

"Why, you will laugh when I tell you.—I am half afraid of falling in love."

"In love! with whom?"

"You desired me to study Miss Fielding's character, but you gave me no amulet against her charms. She is a very beautiful girl, talented and accomplished, and who knows but——"

"Who knows, Fitzosborne, but the Don Giovanni of the day may add another to his list of conquests; is that what your modesty wishes to conceal?"

"Calvert, I really am serious. What Miss Fielding's sentiments are, I am not yet certain of; but I know this, that if I am to be shut up here with her much longer, it is an even chance but *I* fall in love with her, for I really think her a charming girl."

"And would it be an unpardonable folly in

you to fall in love with Miss Fielding?" asked Lord Calvert, in a tremulous accent.

"Unpardonable in me to fall in love with a girl, whom all your family already——"

"Allow me to be the judge of my own concerns, Fitzosborne; my family shall never choose a wife for me."

"My dear fellow, you don't know what it is to contend with the wishes of a family so affectionate and careful of you."

"I think I am quite old enough to take care of myself; and if Miss Fielding prefers you, I should be exceedingly sorry to interfere with her inclinations."

"You think so now, Calvert; but if I was really to make love to Miss Fielding, and she was to prefer me—mind, I don't say she would do so; and indeed I am very far from thinking, let her inclinations be what they might, that her father would consent to her marrying any body but you."

"Why, God bless me, how you go on, Fitzosborne! I have never proposed for Miss Fielding in any way."

“The world, at least this neighbourhood, will never credit that, whilst I can give no proof of it; and, on the contrary, I shall be accused of having supplanted my friend. No—no, I had better make the sacrifice at once, and be off, as I said, to-morrow.”

Lionel walked about the room in violent agitation.

“Make no sacrifices for me, Fitzosborne; whatever my feelings towards Miss Fielding are, or might have been, I have no claims on her—none whatever: let her choose herself between us.”

“Ah! Calvert, you are hurrying me into danger: nobody will believe that I paid my addresses to her with your sanction. If I had your words in writing to refer to hereafter, it might be different; as it is, perhaps the day will come when even you yourself will forget your present declaration.”

“I can never object to write what I have ever uttered;” and in a moment of petulance, Lord Calvert again took up the pen. No guardian sylph was there to avert his danger:



his bosom was a chaos where every contending passion reigned ; and the spirit of evil brooded over him as, scarcely conscious of the import of his actions, he sealed his own destiny in the following words :—

“ Dear Fitzosborne,

“ I once more repeat, that no engagement whatever subsists between me and Miss Fielding. I have no claim to her regard, and I only wish she may consider herself as perfectly disengaged as I am.

“ Yours truly,

“ CALVERT.”

He forgot in his agitation to date this billet, and throwing it across the table, he exclaimed, “ There, Fitzosborne, will that satisfy your scruples ? I suppose you will acknowledge I am in earnest now. Good bye, *au revoir*.” So saying, he darted down stairs, and, leaping into his curricie, pursued his way to Broomhill Barracks.

Thus every thing seemed to promote Fitzosborne's schemes ; and success, even beyond his hopes, appeared already within his grasp. Lord Calvert's absence was too favourable an opportunity to be neglected ; and, before many hours passed, he had in some degree usurped his place not only in the music-room, where duets and trios innumerable were discovered in which his assistance was indispensable, but even in the daily rides and drives Mr. Fitzosborne's society was found equally desirable. The good old Earl, fearful that the retirement of Ellesmere might have been disagreeable to him, was more than ever pleased at his increasing gaiety. The Countess pronounced him to be an agreeable and unassuming young man, to whom no subject, either of literature or politics, seemed unfamiliar. Lady Louisa entertained herself and sometimes her auditors, in carrying on a *persiflage* with him, which it often afforded him both amusement and occupation to parry. And even Lady Matilda's looks no longer offended his pride, or alarmed

his sagacity, for he felt that he was in possession of an antidote with which he could at any moment neutralize any effort she could make to subvert his designs. Nay, even with a master-stroke of policy, he defied her power, and always took occasion in her presence to be more unreserved in his attentions to Julia, in the hope that he might induce her to speak to Lord Calvert on the subject, knowing that every interference of his family would now but the more effectually confirm his estrangement from the object of their mutual thoughts.

And how did Julia receive those attentions? Piqued by Lord Calvert's voluntary and unnecessary absence—mortified at the innate conviction she felt that Lionel had discovered her sentiments towards his friend—she, with a pardonable ebullition of somewhat excited vanity, willingly accepted and almost encouraged those little flatteries which she considered as unmeaning compliments, and which he offered too dextrously to be openly refused. Now painfully distrustful of herself, and anxious to

correct the future by her experience of the past, if she ever bestowed a second thought on Lionel's manner towards her, it was to recoil in shuddering bashfulness from the recollections of what she termed her former errors. Many a time did she condemn herself for having listened to the suggestions of vanity, and given an overstrained interpretation to some of Lord Calvert's looks or actions, which, though infinitely more explicit than those of Lionel, she now looked upon as so vague as to be easily capable of misconstruction ; and if memory occasionally presented to her imagination some even less doubtful testimony of Lord Calvert's regard, she blushing turned away from the painful image, and attributed to mere juvenile friendship, or perhaps some more mortifying source, that evanescent approbation on which it had been her chief delight in former times to meditate.

Meanwhile, the hectic cheek and fevered eye, that to others told only of more vivid beauty, escaped not the cool but scrutinizing

gaze of Lady Matilda Calvert. With the true delicacy of female regard, she sought not for any explanation of those feelings which it was too evident Julia vainly endeavoured to subdue. Yet some few words of renovated kindness, or implied security, occasionally shed a beam of comfort on her agitated spirits, and more than once the considerate kindness of this judicious friend had in some degree composed that flutter of the mind, which so often gives to suspended hope almost the character of confirmed despair.

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE JOURNEY.

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When we go from each pleasure refined  
Which the sense or the soul can receive,  
With no hope in our wand'rings to find  
One ray of the sun-shine we leave—  
An adieu should in utterance die,  
Or if written, but faintly appear ;  
Only heard through the burst of a sigh,  
Only read through the blot of a tear.

SPENCER.

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NOTHING is so deceitful as the progress of time. Change of scene or incident gives wings to the passing moment, but throws additional delays on the past ; and when we look back to the period that has fled by us thus rapidly, we scarcely credit its apparently shortened dura-

tion. But the reverse is the case with a monotonous life; there, day after day rolls slowly on till we start on retrospection at the accumulated weeks that have thus glided by unnoticed, and lapsed into eternity in silence and regret. So it was with the hours at Ellesmere. The time of Lord Calvert's absence at Marley Cottage was expired, before Fitzosborne could credit the calendar that marked it as of longer duration than he had first intended; but it had not passed unprofitably to Lionel. With his usual success, he had still further insinuated himself into the regard of most of the family at Ellesmere, and thus added new trophies to the triumph of that silver-tongued polity which it had been the object of his education to perfect, and the business of his life to pursue.

At last, a letter from Lord Calvert to his father announced his intention of returning to Ellesmere; though, as he said, only for some hours, as he was obliged to be in London on a particular day. The same post also brought a few lines to Fitzosborne, leaving it entirely at his option to return with him or not, and plead-

ing hurry as an excuse for brevity. These despatches were received at breakfast; and the delight with which the Earl and Countess anticipated the return of their son, was only equalled by that of the gay and thoughtless Lady Louisa, who as habitually extracted pleasure from every passing incident, as the bee sips honey from every flower.

The fluctuation of poor Julia's spirits that day, needed no interpretation. A hundred times did she turn away from the window on observing that Fitzosborne's silent but scrutinizing glance pursued her; and more than once Lady Matilda's intelligent but melancholy smile called a crimson flush into her cheeks, that ere long subsided into more than usual paleness.

At last, Lady Louisa burst into the room, exclaiming, "Here he is! here he is! I am sure I saw the carriage winding up the hill yonder. See the light on the lamps, or the harness, or something: Don't you see it glitter?"

"No, Louisa; it is only the sun on the river that you see through the trees."



A silence of anxious expectation ensued. Fitzosborne approached the window to look over Lady Louisa's shoulder. Julia sat pale and motionless.

"There! I told you so!" almost screamed Lady Louisa, clapping her hands. "Now don't you see him? Look, Matilda, they have just turned out of the Beech Grove. I am sure he will be at the door in a minute; and there, I hear mamma coming down stairs—let's run, or we shan't be in time."

Lady Matilda followed her; Fitzosborne also left the room, perhaps to compose rather than exhibit his feelings. Julia involuntarily started up; time was, when she would have been the first to welcome him; the first whom he had greeted. Alas! it was so no longer. She recollected this, and instantaneously sunk again upon her chair. She heard the servants hurrying to the hall; and then came the distant trampling of the horses—the rumbling of the wheels on the gravel. "I cannot meet him now," exclaimed she, as she rushed out of the room. The first flight of the staircase was

gained in a moment, and the next, she stopped to listen to his voice, as well as the loud beating of her heart would let her. But she need not have delayed, for the only accents that broke upon her ear were those of the voluble Laroche explaining with some difficulty, that “Milor ave a stay à la Caserne. Miladi l’avoit voulu absolument; Milor found her irresistible, he could not come; il a fait l’impossible, je n’en doute guères, Mesdames. Encore he tell a me to emballer every ting; son départ est arrêté pour demain, Monsieur, à neuf heures moins un quart, bien précis: tous les chevaux sont déjà commandés. Nous prendrons Monsieur Jessop avec nous chemin faisant. Ah! I ave no time to lose; puis Monsieur Vitsbon, voici un petit mot pour vous de la part de Miladi, qui se porte à merveille. Se is charming.”

If there is a moment when disappointment falls with an accumulated weight, it is when the heart, with all the elasticity of hope, has risen as it were to meet the blow. Mortification, displeasure, and doubt, now crushed poor Julia’s lately excited spirits; and as she turned

slowly and sadly into her own room, the tears which pride was insufficient to suppress, stood on the burning cheeks which were scarcely conscious of their presence. She, however, by the most strenuous efforts, contrived to regain sufficient composure to be able to join the family at dinner; but, as the evening passed, and the hour of Lord Calvert's return approached, the exertion became intolerable; and under the plea of a head-ach, which was scarcely fictitious, she retired to her own apartment.

She had hardly left the drawing-room when Lord Calvert arrived. His impatience to return had increased with every mile that brought him nearer to Julia Fielding. How would she meet him? How would she receive him? If she appeared glad at his return—if she dressed herself for him in her cameos, or any thing he had sent her from abroad, just to show that she had been thinking of him—even if she received him with that cordial, unembarrassed air she used to greet him with, it would show that at least she was indifferent to Fitzosborne: and if so, why should Lord Calvert leave her?

Why not remain even after Fitzosborne went, and at once ascertain her sentiments?

So great was Lord Calvert's agitation, that when he entered the drawing-room, he could not see clearly whether Julia was one of the company or not; but after he had shaken hands at least twice round with every body else, he inquired with as much composure as he could assume, "where Miss Fielding was?"

"Gone to bed," was Lady Ellesmere's laconic reply; for at that moment she was debating in her own mind, whether Oswald did not look very thin, or whether he was only fatigued with his journey.

Lord Ellesmere and Lady Louisa made a thousand inquiries, the one about the fish and the other about the party, to all which he contrived to answer tolerably collectedly; although, crossing to the other side of the room, to where Lady Matilda was at work, he inquired, in a whisper, whether Miss Fielding had been ill?

"She has had a head-ach to-night; but I assure you we have all been very gay since you went, Oswald."

Lady Matilda remembered with pique the indifference with which Lord Calvert had last spoken of her beloved Julia; her pride was roused for her friend, and, feeling for her as she would have done for herself, she would not admit, even for her brother's sake, that she could "unsought be won." Lord Calvert made no answer, but soon after, complaining of fatigue, he retired to his room, merely settling with Fitzosborne, as he passed him, the hour at which they both should depart the following morning.

Lord Calvert, sleepless and unhappy, counted every hour that was told by the clock on the large echoing staircase. He listened with restless impatience for the sound of any footstep that could give notice of approaching day, and looked as eagerly through his curtains for the first beam of morning, as if returning light was to bring with it renovated happiness. But, with all his watchfulness, he was unable to decide upon his future plans. "I must see Julia; the first glance of her countenance will guide me better than all my own reflections."

If Lord Calvert's thoughts had "murdered sleep," Julia's slumbers had not been more refreshing. Finding that it was impossible longer to defer meeting him, she determined at least that her manner should betray neither anger nor embarrassment. And in order to recruit her spirits and confirm her resolution, she had risen early, with the intention of enjoying a quiet, solitary walk. But as she turned from the hall-door, she unexpectedly met Fitzosborne, who, without waiting for an invitation, prepared to accompany her.

This accidental interview was so favourable to Lionel's wishes—so gratifying to his feelings, that joy danced in his eyes, and the elation of hope played round the corners of his beautiful mouth. But there was something in the expression of his countenance from which Julia involuntarily shrunk; and as there was no possibility of declining his attendance, she resolved to curtail her ramble, and to confine her walk to the broad terrace that spread in front of the house. The morning sun shone bright and exhilarating, as they slowly pursued their walk.

Julia, embarrassed by his manner, held her head downwards, scarcely daring to meet his eye; whilst the fire of his countenance and the triumph of his step seemed almost to anticipate the declaration of his sentiments. Thus they walked for the long length of the house. At the end of the terrace, Julia, in turning round, unconsciously raised her eyes towards its windows, and as instantaneously dropped them, whilst a blush crimsoned even to her polished brow; for in that moment she had beheld Lord Calvert, who, standing at his window, his arms crossed and his brows contracted, had watched all their movements. Fitzosborne too, following the direction of Miss Fielding's eyes, had caught a casual glimpse of his figure. His walk became more firm, his triumph more perceptible. But Lord Calvert staid not to witness it. Hastily retiring from the window, he renewed with increased agitation the preparations for his departure, and was the first who entered the breakfast parlour with feverish impatience to accelerate the tedious meal.

The Countess and her daughters soon found

him, and were in a few minutes followed by Miss Fielding. A cold and haughty bow was at first the only salutation he vouchsafed to her : and now pride and embarrassment struggled for mastery in her, and Fitzosborne was the only one of the party who seemed perfectly at ease. And as Monsieur Laroche particularly prided himself on the despatch and punctuality of his arrangement, the carriages drove round, as he said, *à point nommé* ; and the unpleasantness of the scene was speedily terminated, by the abrupt departure of the two travellers.

It would have been somewhat embarrassing, and by no means useful to Fitzosborne, to travel *tête-à-tête* with Lord Calvert ; and to avoid this dilemma, as he was not aware of Mr. Jessop's companionship, he had accepted Mr. Warburton's proposal of taking him up with him. He accordingly drove in his dennet round by Posy Lodge, whilst Lord Calvert took up Mr. Jessop at the Barracks, when, resigning his seat to his servant, the four gentlemen arranged themselves in and on Lord Calvert's carriage, leaving their domestics to follow.



Fitzosborne was to leave this party at the town of R——, which was within ten miles of Lord Tralee's; and the travellers having agreed to dine with him there, and not to separate till afterwards, they resolved to stroll out whilst the busy hostess prepared her best bill of fare in honour of such distinguished guests.

On a common, at the outskirts of the town, a fair was going on; and thither of course they directed their steps, as to the scene most promising amusement. There, groups of farmers were discussing the merits of their respective cattle; in another part, their wives were zealously bargaining for butter or straw hats, as the case might be; whilst their blooming daughters were exchanging the value of their eggs and chickens for stay-laces, ribands, gilt gingerbread, and such other attractive goods as were displayed to infinite advantage on the clean deal tables, that stood under awnings in imitation of a street.

At the extremity of this crowd, a few tents and booths were erected, most of which boasted the allurements of a drunken fiddler and an ad-

vertisement of "Whitbread's Entire." Into one of these, some poor Irish hay-makers had been enticed, and were incautiously spending a part of their hard-earned wages, and cheering themselves with roaring rather than singing some of the wild choruses of their country.

At the door of another tent stood two figures, whom even at a distance it was impossible to mistake for other than "mere Irish," although the poor people themselves were totally unconscious of there being any thing remarkable in their appearance. The woman had a broad comely countenance, in which frank good-humour was the only expression. Her features and complexion gave evidence that she had seen some forty summers; but her eye-brows were yet black, and a smart turn upwards in her chin denoted something of merriment, and much of activity. Her hair, in which but little gray was perceptible, was strained over a cushion tight up from her forehead, and a high-cauled cap loaded with bright pink ribands surmounted the edifice, the ears, which occasionally met under her chin, being left loose;

a very narrow black riband was tied tight round her throat, from which was suspended a tin cross. Her gown, which shone in all the colours of the rainbow, was carefully pinned up behind, and displayed to full perfection a bright green stuff petticoat, which was so stiff by nature, and so plaited by art, that it perfectly answered the purposes of a hoop. A clean white apron, and shoes and stockings, which were evidently quite new, completed the costume. At her feet, lay her frieze cloak folded up beside an immense bag of Irish linen, whilst she was carelessly leaning against a post, with her brawny purple arms folded together, and her quick twinkling eyes surveying every passenger in turn as she commented upon them with some archness and infinite vivacity.

The countenance of her companion was very different, and by no means prepossessing. He was apparently between fifty and sixty; the whole upper part of his head was bald; but at each side, his hair, thick and bushy, curled over his ears and into his neck behind; it was strong in texture, and in colour of that kind of

iron-gray, which indicated its having once been black. His forehead and the outline of his nose were particularly handsome ; but there was a sinister expression in his eyes as they scowled from beneath huge shaggy eye-brows, that excited a feeling compounded of fear and distrust. Had he stood erect, his figure would have been tall, but he was then leaning on a black-thorn stick ; his coarse muscular hands at the same time supporting his unshorn chin, and clasping the knotty head of his ponderous bludgeon. His gray coat cut square behind, his Cornemara stockings and substantial brogues, declared at once his birth-place.

“ Arrah ! Barney, and isn’t that himself ? ” suddenly exclaimed the woman, as the four travellers, linked arm-in-arm, emerged from the crowd, laughing heartily at some pert retort they had just received from a pretty country girl ; then clapping her hands with joy, the next moment she stood directly opposite to Fitz-osborne.

“ Oh musha ! that my eyes should light on yez again ! Honour dear, an’t it you ? ”

“What! Nurse M’Clane! What the devil brought you here?”

“Didn’t Barney and me come over every foot of the way from Ballyfoyle, when we heard your honour was come back from foreign parts? and sarrow a sight could we get of her after all, and only tould us she was well, the cratur, when they last heard from her.”

“Well, Nurse, I am heartily glad to see you; here, take this for you and Barney to drink my health. I see him standing yonder.”

“Long life to your honour, and it’s that we will do to-night before to-morrow. Blessings on your sweet face! But may be it’s a word now you’d tell me of poor Nancy, the cratur. I don’t ax to see her; but if I could only just make so bould as to hear her step across the floor, isn’t it myself that would know the very sound of her foot, and she out of hearing? Och hone! but it was a happy time when she was playing in the cabin forenent me!”

The poor woman put her apron to her eyes to dry her tears, and Fitzosborne took that

favourable opportunity of getting away from her.

Of course his companions questioned and rallied him on this unexpected attack. He parried their attacks as well as he could, by saying, that Mrs. M'Clane was a very consequential person at Ballyfoyle, as she had had the honour of nursing him, and "Nancy the cratur" was a pretty little *amourette* that he had been introduced to on his last visit to Ireland. He laughed and joked on the subject with perfect self-possession; and his companions allowed it to drop, when they found it carried with it no sting; for in such cases the amusement of the quizz-ed is in exact proportion to the annoyance of the quizz-ee.

Dinner passed with considerable gaiety; the hostess did her utmost to please the palates of her guests, and their appetites did ample justice to her culinary skill. The carriages were ordered to come to the door in ten minutes. The bill was called for, the last bottle of burning Madeira was half emptied, and Fitzosborne secretly congratulated himself on his

happy deliverance, when the room door opened, and the waiter with infinite bustle ushered in Barney in person, who, after making a most obsequious bow to the company, struck his black-thorn stick against the carpet, and remained bolt upright in perfect silence.

“ Well, Barney, what do you want with me ? ” inquired Fitzosborne, in no pleasant tone.

“ It’s myself thought you might be wanting me, your honour.”

“ No, thank you, friend ; I gave some silver to your wife for you, Barney, and if you like a glass of gin I’ll order you one down stairs.” And Lionel rang the bell with vehemence.

“ Not at all, your honour, not at all ; it’s not Barney M’Clane that would be the spalpeen to come begging for spirits, barring it was a drop of whiskey itself ; but I thought, your honour, you might want to ask about, you know who, your honour ; and says Judy to me, ‘ Step up, Barney,’ says she, ‘ in the name of God, for he’ll may-be have something to send him, if it is but the making of a wily coat ;’ and so, your

honour, I just made bould to prisint myself just for to tell you——”

There was a leer in Barney's eye, and a curl in the corners of his mouth, that plainly showed how much he thought his auditor in his power. And whilst he continued, as it were, to probe him gradually, his own countenance betrayed all the cool sagacity of the surgeon who feels not the wound he gives.

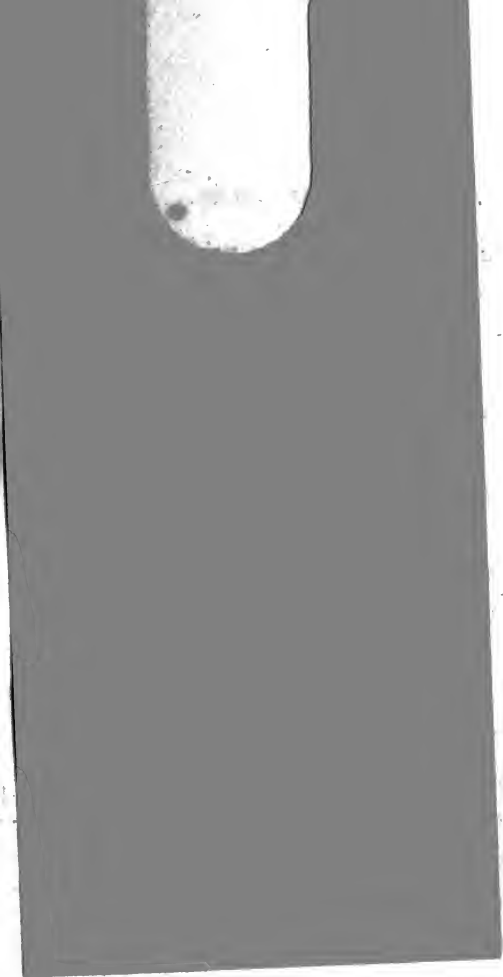
“ Hang the fellow, I must hear his story out, or I shall never get rid of him,” whispered Lionel to his friends, as he signed to Barney to wait for him down stairs. Then taking leave of his companions, he vouchsafed a conference of some ten minutes to the sturdy Hibernian, and jumping gaily into his carriage, turned off towards Lord Tralee's, leaving the three others to pursue their way to London.

END OF VOL. I.

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